

# **ADVANCED LITERARY ESSAYS**

(FOR POST GRADUATE AND I. A. S. EXAMINEES)

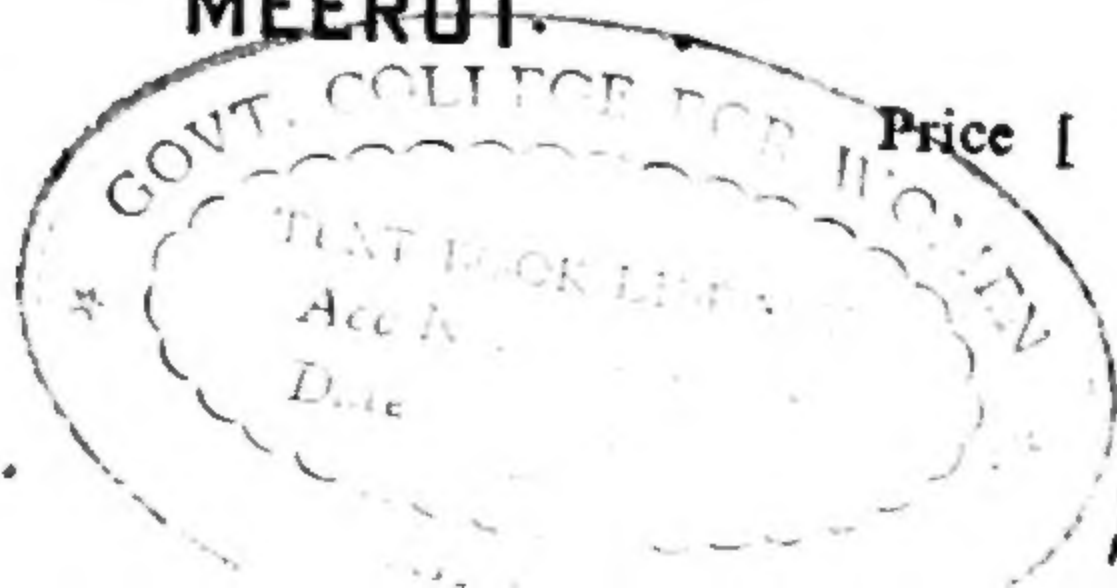
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# Literary Essays

SEC. 1

**DRAMA**

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## **Trends in Modern Drama**

The glorious days of the Elizabethan stage were followed by a long period of decline and eclipse for the English drama. The post Elizabethans vainly endeavoured to capture the graces of Shakespeare and other illustrious predecessors, while the heroic tragedies and the comedies of love and intrigue during the Restoration hardly added any glorious chapter to the history of English drama. Goldsmith and Sheridan attempted a partial revival in the eighteenth century, but their sporadic brilliance was followed by a spell of darkness which spread for almost a century. From the time of Goldsmith and Sheridan down to the close of the nineteenth century, the dramas were written mostly by the poets and these were more or less "closet dramas" and hardly fit to be acted. It is possible that the rise and growth of the novel had adverse effects on the fortunes of the drama, although this does not completely explain its decline. When, therefore, the true drama was reborn towards the end of the nineteenth century it found itself amid different surroundings and had to face new problems. It was only natural that the modern drama should use a newer kind of technique and deal with subjects which never occurred to the minds of older dramatists.

### **General Characteristics : Realism—**

Realism is one of the most important features of the modern English drama. Generally speaking, the modern dramatist wishes to make us more intimately acquainted with life rather than help us to escape from its sordid realities. The refreshing romantic atmosphere of the Shakespearean comedy—love making and jesting—is all too rare today. Far more common in contemporary dramas are "the weariness, the fever and the fret" of life. The modern dramatist does not like to impose a dream upon life by transporting us to places like Illyria or Arden. Neither is he fond of creating such creatures of pure fancy as Puck, Oberon, Caliban and Ariel. The drama has thus ceased to be romantic or poetic and has become sternly realistic. Of course, there are some dramatists like Sir James Barrie and W. B. Yeats who have continued the tradition of the Romantic drama. But the examples of poetic or romantic drama are rare in the modern age and we

are thoroughly justified in making the general remark that modern drama is essentially realistic.

### **The problem play :**

But what are the subjects which the realistic modern drama treats of ? It deals with social problems of all kinds, and hence this modern type of play is known as the problem play. The modern drama, the problem play, treats of all kinds of social problems, the problem of marriage, for instance, or that of the administration of law and justice or of the strife between capital and labour. The modern drama has thus become far more intellectual than it ever was before and gives us plenty of food for thought. Shaw once said he wanted "a pit of philosophers" and the modern drama has forced the audience to bring their brains to the theatre and to use them. No more dozing and yawning behind the fans !

### **Prose as the medium of expression :**

With the love of realism and with the advent of the problem-play, a change has come over the medium of the drama too. Verse will be thoroughly unsuitable for the modern drama and hence the modern plays are almost exclusively written in prose. Indeed some of the finest prose written in modern times is to be found in the pages of these plays. It does not mean that the tradition of verse drama is completely dead. There are dramatists like Massfield and T. S. Eliot who have splendidly continued the tradition of verse drama.

### **Democratic in tone :**

The modern drama is far more democratic in tone than it was ever before. Before the eighteenth century, domestic plays were very rare : Lillo and Moore were almost the first English dramatists to attempt the tragic bourgeois. The aristocracy figures too prominently in the plays produced before the eighteenth century. Since the modern age is essentially an age of democracy, the common men and women clamour representation both in the Parliament and the literature. Hence modern drama has registered an advance over the drama of the previous centuries and the plays of to-day treat of the common man, the man in the street. It is with the joys and sorrows of this hitherto neglected piece of humanity that the modern dramatist is most concerned.



**Characterization :**

The features of the modern drama, which we have been discussing above, led to another important result. The characters in modern plays are types rather than individuals. The dramatist is concerned to-day much more with the classes or types of men than with the individuals, and consequently the characters in modern plays are representatives or the symbols of the classes to which they belong. In other words, the modern drama makes use of class-symbolism. This may have its advantages and may give an impression of universality. But the fine characters, so plentifully scattered in the pages of Shakespeare and many other Elizabethan dramatists, have disappeared from modern drama. We cannot any more have Lears and Othellos, Cleopatras and Desdemonas. The modern drama has become "hero-less". At any rate, if there are any heroes and heroines, they are common little men and women, not great and awe-inspiring personages. The Elizabethan tragedy, almost without exception, treated of exceptional beings and magnificent personages, but the modern plays, like those of Galsworthy, portray the tragic in the lives of a Jones, a Roberts or a Falder, none of whom has any pretension to greatness.

**The Theatre :**

The theatre too has undergone a considerable change. The modern theatre has infinitely greater resources at its command than had the Elizabeth theatre. To create a complete impression of the illusion is possible in no theatre, but the modern dramatist does not need appeal to his audience to the "piecing-up" of the imperfections with their thoughts. In a modern theatre it is possible to produce subtle artistic effects. The construction of the theatre and its resources have naturally had much influence on the technique of modern plays. The dramatists to-day generally try to have a first hand knowledge of the theatre and include long stage directions in their plays so that these may be artistically produced on the stage and may appear as realistic as possible.

**The Pioneers of Modern Drama: Robertson, A. W. Pinero, H. A. Jones:**

English drama was at a very low ebb when T. W. Robertson, a playwright and actor, appeared on the scene. Fully alive to the lack of realism and low artistic tone of the drama of his age, he determined to import realism into drama and raise its artistic level. The year 1865, which witnessed the performance of his play

'Society', proved a landmark in the revival of the English stage. The revival manifested itself in a stress on realism both in subject matter and technique. In place of types and stock characters Robertson presented individual men and women, persons of flesh and blood. In the matter of technique and form he discarded blank verse and rhetoric in favour of natural human speech. Robertson, however, was not a bold or revolutionary spirit and he could not divest himself of the old traditions, such as romantic melodrama. He, therefore, failed to exercise any substantial influence on his contemporaries and the much needed reform in drama required for a more daring literary genius.

The daring genius was found, to some extent, in Arthur Wing Pinero and H. A. Jones who made pretty serious efforts to drive away undiluted romanticism from the English stage. An expert craftsman, Pinero had the courage to introduce several innovations in dramatic technique. In his 'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,' produced in 1893, he played the role of the pioneer in discarding the 'soliloquy' and the 'aside' along with certain other old stage conventions, thus bringing drama closer to life.

Pinero and Jones, however, could not be sufficiently daring to ignore the public taste altogether. Though Jones wrote in his preface to 'Saints and Sinners' ( 884) that play writing should not be merely "the art of sensational and spectacular illusion" but "mainly and chiefly the art of representing English life", he could not avoid in his plays theatrical excitement and too much use of coincidence just to please the audience. Hence the realism of these dramatists was skin deep and not the genuine stuff which subsequent playwrights were to provide.

### **Dawn of Realism :**

The person who infused real new revolutionary blood into English drama was Henrik Ibsen, a Norwegian playwright. In England, William Archer, the famous dramatic critic, enthusiastically espoused Ibsen's cause. Through Ibsen genuine realism was introduced into English plays. Ibsen's characters are drawn from ordinary life and characterization in his plays receives more attention than the patching up of a well-knit plot. Moreover, the plot in his plays is essentially psychological, leaving little room for pure action or incident. The Ibsenian play is always a play of ideas, of characters swayed with ideas and struggling against the forces of

convention and society. Ibsen's ideas gave a rude shock to the susceptibilities of his contemporaries, but he was bold enough to stick to his theories and technique. Consequently, he exercised a great influence all over the Continent, and the drama of ideas, of revolt against society and convention came to stay. The tyranny of the star system and the stranglehold of the commercial-minded theatre managers could no longer throttle true dramatic art. The renaissance of modern drama was in full swing with the advent of Ibsen.

#### G. B. Shaw :

If William Archer propagated the plays of Ibsen, it was Shaw who imported the real Ibsen spirit into English drama. Highly original and independent in many ways, Shaw was immensely influenced by Ibsen and, like him, he became a champion of conferring the new freedom of subject-matter and technique on the English drama.

Shaw was a great teacher and a great preacher and he found that the stage was the fittest platform in the world for him. He picked up the dramatist's job and became not only a great teacher but also a great dramatist. Indeed there are not wanting critics who assert that his dramatic genius is second only to Shakespeare's. As a teacher, Shaw used the method of Paradox, a method which has been found useful by other teachers as well. His opinions are not only brilliant but revolutionary. heretical. He had often consciously behaved like a clown and a mountebank in his efforts to make people listen to him, and, although he was really a great and original thinker, there are many people who wonder if he should be taken seriously.

Bernard Shaw was a great moralist who used his plays as an instrument for giving vent to his opinions and for improving society. His plays are, therefore, propagandist in nature. He has little sympathy with those who believe in the "Art for Art's sake" shibboleth. For Shaw, Art exists only for Life's sake; Art according to him must be didactic. "For Art's sake alone", he has said, "I would not face the toil of writing a single sentence." "I always have to preach," he admitted himself. "My plays all have a purpose." The moral purpose is almost an obsession with Shaw; he has been well described as the "Knight of the Burning Pencil."

Bernard Shaw was an individualist and a rebel. He fights the ordinary view of religion and the ordinary view of the state. The



universal love of romance, too, has come in for severe criticism at his hands; romance is, to him, "the great heresy" that should be rooted out from art and life. Through his plays, embellished by elaborate prefaces, he made people see into the light of the day. Shaw lived almost exclusively the life of reason; he had a profound distrust of emotions and passions of all kinds. "He sees only the evil sides of patriotism, he hates war, he reduces Napoleon, Caesar, and Shakespeare to ordinary dimensions, he believes that nothing that glitters is really gold." His plays are mainly intellectual. They are full of original ideas and each one of them is a challenge. Phelps has cleverly remarked that Shaw agrees with Hamlet in believing that the world is out of joint, but unlike Hamlet, his chief happiness comes from the thought that he was born to set it right. In spite of all his brilliance and originality, Shaw was a destructive critic, but he made us think. His pages bristle with ideas and for many in the audience the end of his play is the beginning of mental activity. It has been well remarked that instead of giving us food he gives us an appetite. But had Shaw a well defined system of philosophy? The question is very difficult to answer for want of a word; his philosophy has been described as 'Shavian' which means the most amazing intellectual somersaults and acrobatics." Shaw was indeed a great "mental gymnast".

By 1890 Shaw's knowledge of contemporary economic matters was considerable, and it was controlled by a comprehensive philosophic outlook. Like his friends he envisaged a better world to be brought into being by the co-operative efforts of realistic thinkers, activated by a selfless love of humanity. In the writings of Samuel Butler he saw an escape from the Darwinian theory of evolution which made chance, not purpose, the determining factor, and, when in 1891 he came to know the thought of Nietzsche, he realised that he had already been thinking in terms of a purposive Life Force behind the workings of the universe. This Life Force he, moreover, perceived to explain the place of woman in the world, for it accounted for woman's ruthless pursuit of man. Men like himself must, therefore, by intelligent co-operation with the Life Force, use all their endeavours to hasten the evolution of mankind to higher moral, intellectual, economic and social standards. To this stage in his thinking he had practically come when he turned to the drama as his medium of expression.

The first collection of Shaw's plays appeared in 1893 under the title 'Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant'. 'Widowers' Houses' was his attack on slum-landlordism. The pseudo-Ibsenism was contained in 'The Philanderer'. Prostitution lay behind 'Mrs. Warren's Profession'. 'Candida' was an Ibsen-like consideration of marriage. 'The Man of Destiny' and 'Caesar and Cleopatra' were adventures in history. "Professional delusions and impostures," and questions of conscience make up 'The Doctor's Dilemma'. In 'Arms and the Man' he attacks romantic soldiering on the one hand and romantic love on the other. Sergius, the romantic soldier, is set off against Bluntschli, the modern realistic fighter. The former sets his life at naught in a battle as warriors did in olden times, whereas the latter, weighing the pros and cons in the scales of reason, believes that it is the duty of a soldier to live as long as he can and that soldiering is the art of attacking the enemy when he is weak and running away from him when he is strong. Shaw introduces an element of love in the play only to demonstrate that there is no romance about it, nothing like the passion that moved Romeo and Juliet. Raina, solemnly engaged to Sergius, transfers her affections, at the first opportunity that offers, to the attractive Bluntschli, and Sergius, similarly, to the attractive Louka. Love in life, says Shaw, alters as often as it alteration finds. The world is not well lost for its sake.

With publication of 'Man and Superman' in 1903, Shaw's plays assume both theatrical and dramatic value. This play has been described by the author as "A Comedy and a Philosophy" and deals with his idea of Life Force which is making towards a better race of men and towards the evolution of the superman. In this play, Shaw reverses some popular notions; he tells us, for instance, that in love it is woman who takes the initiative and not man; woman is the pursuer, man the pursued. Paradox has already become Shaw's greatest weapon for thrusting his brilliant ideas home into the minds of his audience. The exuberant high spirits which characterised his plays before 1914, often bringing into his comedy a lively element of force, did not appear so much afterwards. Instead, something of grandeur and poetry found expression in famous passages of 'Saint Joan' and 'Back to Methuselah,' though his comic vision still played freely and variously, fully exemplifying the Shavian wit and humour. 'Back to Methuselah' (1921) treats of Creative Evolution and the Life Force of 'Man and

Superman' to which it forms a sequel. The problem of democracy becomes the subject of 'The Apple-cart' (1929); Shaw's plays deal with problems of one kind or the other and attack one or the other of England's important social institutions. In 'Saint Joan' alone Shaw cannot help introducing touches of poetry: for once Shaw, the brilliant wit and satirist, feels real reverence for his heroine and attains almost Galsworthian impartiality.

In one sense, Shaw is the antithesis of Shakespeare. Shakespeare portrayed life objectively, so objectively indeed that he seems not "to abide our question". But Shaw is egotistical, individualistic. The one subject of all his remarks is Bernard Shaw and the most impressive character in his plays is the author himself. He has emphasized this fact by adding a long Preface to each one of his plays. These Prefaces are not only written in Shaw's fine prose, they are often brilliant essays.

Shaw's ideas can never cease to form an important part of his dramatic legacy. Nevertheless, it is as a dramatist upon the stage that Shaw demands our primary concern. In his own day his audience did not consist only of those who shared his ideas. That this was so suggests that it was the dramatist and not the preacher who exerted the real power, though it must be admitted that no small part of the pleasure felt by contemporaries lay in the stimulus given both to disciples and opponents by the sparking irreverence of the wit playing on topics of particular current interest. But this wit was always subservient to the total working of the genius of the comic playwright. His dramatic instinct, indeed, was altogether transcendent and it so wilfully fashioned its own play that the audience almost forgot in its delight the seriousness of the lesson it had been offered. Shaw once spoke of the "lightness of heart, without which nothing can succeed in the theatre," and in his own paradoxical union of the prophet and the jester lies the assurance of his dramatic survival.

### Reign of Naturalism :

"I always have to preach," observed Shaw. "My plays all have a purpose." The plays of Shaw are inspired by a conscious iconoclastic zeal, a sort of partisan spirit, but Granville Barker and John Galsworthy—the two other great luminaries on the firmament of English drama—gave a version of realism in their plays, which

has no touch of the partisan spirit or the zeal of the propagandist. Their realism has been described as 'naturalism', *i. e.* an attempt to present "both fair and foul, no more, no less." The naturalistic play is intended to be objective and impersonal, though both Galsworthy and Barker could not be absolutely dispassionate. Both were revolutionaries in their own way, Barker revolting against the tyranny of Victorian convention over the individual, and Galsworthy against the heartless but mighty forces which crush the individual. Barker expounds the ideal of self-realization, while Galsworthy strives to make out a case for tolerance and mutual understanding and accommodation.

### John Galsworthy :

Galsworthy sets before the public the phenomena of life and character, selected and combined, but not distorted, by the dramatist's outlook, set down without fear, favour or prejudice. Galsworthy has all the detachment that this method requires. He follows his own advice that the dramatist should include "nothing because it pays, nothing because it will make a sensation, no situation faked, no characters falsified, no fireworks, only something imagined and put down in a passion of sincerity." In his desire for naturalism and sincerity, Galsworthy does not try to conceal the unpleasant and ugly facts of life.

Galsworthy has been rightly called a typical representative of modern humanitarianism and he has a reverence for all life. He extends his sympathy not only to the down-trodden classes of society but even to animals. His imaginative sympathy for all leads him to impartiality. "Let me try to eliminate and bias," he writes, "and see the whole thing as should an umpire—one of those pure beings in white coats, purged of all the prejudices, passions, and predilections of mankind." One disadvantage of this impartiality is that it is apt to make a play seem inconclusive. In his plays Galsworthy gives us very careful diagnosis of some of the social diseases but, unlike Shaw, he suggests no remedies. The propagandist element, often so prominent in Shaw's plays, is rarely to be found in those of Galsworthy.

Galsworthy is impartial between character and character, but he is not impartial when faced by human shortsightedness and folly. His plays are really a tremendous indictment of the whole fabric of modern civilization. In all his plays, Society or the Audience is the

real villain; there is hardly a villain among the characters themselves. While Shaw entertains and tickles us even when he scolds, Galsworthy is apt to prick or even stab. "His wholesome pills have very little coating of sweet sugar." (*Coats*)

It was in this spirit that he criticized society. His temperamental preoccupation was with social reform. With cold objectivity his plays exposed the wrong headedness of some traditional beliefs, and class prejudices that he considered stupid and wasteful. Most of his plays are concerned with the clash of two opposing principles, both obstinately held. He presents the case for either side with equal fairness. He is scrupulously impartial. He never loads the dice. In 'Strife' (1909), for example, old John Anthony, the dictatorial chairman of the board of directors of the Trenartha Tin Plate Works, believes that if he gives in to the demand of the strikers—and he is not impassive to the misery the strike has brought the men—he and his co-directors will fail in the duty they owe to Capital. Roberts, the leader of the men, believes with equal conviction that Capital is "a thing that buys the sweat of men's brows, and the tortures of their brains, at its own price," that it is "a white-faced, stony-hearted monster that must be fought for the sake of all those who came after throughout all time." In 'The Skin Game' (1920) the conflict is between the tradition of the old landed aristocracy and the new ideal of business efficiency and push. In 'Loyalties' (1922) it is between the stick-together clannishness of gentlemen and the parvenu Jew who does not recognize their code of loyalty and refuses to retract an accusation against one of them which he believes to be just. In other plays he arraigns the wrongfulness of certain current practices: the different standard of justice for the rich and for the poor ('The Silver Box' 1906); the useless cruelty of solitary confinement ('Justice' 1910). 'Justice' was so effective on the stage that it persuaded Mr. Churchill, who was Home Secretary at the time, to abolish the practice of solitary confinement in prisons.

To Galsworthy, the true intent of art is not only for delight, but also for enlightenment and edification. His dramas are realistic and naturalistic, not romantic and lyrical. He aims at the faithful representation of contemporary social life and his plays are problem plays dealing with the problems of contemporary society. He never takes us "Back to Muthuselah" as Shaw does, nor does he transport us to romantic regions where Barri's imagination dwells.



Most of Galsworthy's plays belong to the social type of tragedy, where there is conflict between class and class, community and community, group and group. The tragedy is due to lack of understanding, sympathy and co-operation between opposing groups and classes and the result is friction, waste and havoc. In social tragedy the question of external fate does not arise. With the elimination of external fate, the hero too has tended to disappear. Galsworthy's characters are not great personages of high rank; the majority of them are mediocre and even mean. With the hero, the villain too has disappeared from social tragedy. The suffering and miseries of modern social life are not brought about by designedly wicked people but often by persons animated by the best intentions. The tragedy is really due to imperfections in social laws and customs. In social tragedy, therefore, the villain is society itself.

Galsworthy's plays are solid and honest; there is no ornamentation, no claptrap no melodrama, hardly a superfluous word. As in Shakespeare's tragedies, so in Galsworthy's there is a tremendous feeling of waste and it is this feeling which is the centre of tragic impressions. His balance, restraint, and sincerity deepen the tragedy and make it so impressive. But his balanced moral preoccupation and the limitation of the dramatic form as he handled it worked against the creation of vital individual characterisation.

#### **Return to Romance : J. M. Barrie :**

The popularity of realism and naturalism did not oust the romantic element altogether from the domain of modern drama. The drawback to naturalism, especially in a world so full of drabness and disenchantment, is that it lacks colour, poetry, beauty—those things which give delight and which the intellectual theatre of enlightenment perforce ignored. However tirelessly the new school continued to debunk Romance, the average playgoer still hankered after the unusual, the romantic. Realism stimulates the brain but a touch of romanticism vivifies the heart. The 'lies of romance' relieve the tedium of every day life. It was J. M. Barrie, a Scottish writer, who provided lies of romance by turning his face away from drab and cruel reality. If he had never written anything else, he would still be remembered as the creator of Peter Pan, the boy who would not grow up.

Barrie's temperament shrank from the spectacle of cruelty and injustice and sought escape in magic isles and Never Never

Lands. He was an arch-romantic. He was really at his ease with children, and he had a child's vivid fancy and delight in make-believe. The fairies, who no doubt were present at his christening, endowed him with an elfin fantasy, a poetic insight, and the knack of story-building, and finally the supreme dramatic gift of inventing charming puppets and the ability to make them move convincingly without betraying the strings that guide them. Shaw's analysis of his component parts is "nine-tenths fun and one-tenth sentimentality."

Indeed, Barrie in general sought neither to criticize nor to penetrate below the surface of life. He would rather soar on the wings of fantasy, and enchant his audience to follow him by the dexterity of his theatrical craftsmanship. In his own way he rivalled Shaw by the tender poetic whimsicality of his imagination. As soon as his imagination began to create illusions for the stage, Barrie usually turned his back on the disagreeable in life and set about pleasing an audience which, like himself, wanted its heart moved, but without pain, and its fancy lit up with rosy lights. So in 'Quality Streets' (1903) he evoked a charmingly idyllic picture of love in the days of the Napoleonic wars. In two of his best plays, 'Dear Brutus' (1917) and 'Mary Rose' (1920), he typically checked his development of the themes from giving rise to any deep uneasiness, in 'Dear Brutus' speculating on the responsibility of each of us for his failure in life and in 'Mary Rose' letting the supernatural sport with mortals, but in both plays leaving his audience only pleasantly bewitched by his artistic playing upon their feelings. In these plays Barrie has gone very far from the world of reality and created a dream world of his own. The crowning achievement of Barrie was 'Peter Pan' (1904). The secret of its excellent success was perhaps dramatic's affinity with his own Peter Pan, an elusive spirit which preferred not to grow up in this modern world. The atmosphere of Barrie's plays is dreamy and unreal, but to the sore hearts of people suffering under the satire of Shaw and Galsworthy, this work must have brought soothing balm and healing.

What was Barrie's contribution to the twentieth century drama? "He showed that naturalism was not the only way, and gave a very timely reminder that a play must do more than stimulate the brain; it must touch the heart. In an age of growing cynicism he guarded the guttering flame of Romance and kept it from being quenched by intellectualism." (Lynton Hudson).

**The Irish Movement : —**

No account of modern British drama can be complete without a reference to the Irish Theatre Movement and the Provincial Repertory Theatre. The new Irish Theatre was founded in 1892 by a group of young prominent writers with W. B. Yeats at their head. Later on, Miss A. E. Harniman, a wealthy English woman, joined this group of writers and provided funds with which the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, was constructed.

The Irish Movement, also known as the Celtic Revival, was essentially national in character; and concentrated on Irish themes and ideas. It also aimed at reforming the stage and turning it into a thing of beauty. The movement was not intended to espouse the cause of realism or naturalism. It did not think of a play as either a sermon or a debate, not as intellectual at all, as appealing primarily to the brain. It was not intended to make people think, but to make them feel; to give them an emotional and spiritual uplifting such as they might experience at Mass in a cathedral or at the performance of a symphony.

Owing to such aims and ideals the Irish playwrights turned to the past of their country, its rich myths and legends. In a sense their approach was romantic and political. In his plays W. B. Yeats glorified the national myths and legends and depicted primitive human emotions. Essentially a poet, he gave beautiful ideas and first rate lyrical poetry but failed in characterisation and plot construction. The popularity of his 'The Land of Heart's Desire' and 'Countess Cathleen' depends more upon symbolism and poetic charm than on dramatic power.

**J. M. Synge : —**

Synge came to Ireland at the instigation of Yeats and began writing plays dealing with Irish subjects. He sought inspiration from the unspoilt fisherfolk of the Aran Isles. There Synge studied life, not the conventional life of cities, but "the eternal life of man spent under sun and rain and in rude physical effort, scarce changed since the beginning." He watched the tragedy of the grim fatalistic battle with the cold, grey, hungry sea, and the little sordid comedies of circumscribed, monotonous existence. He saw at first hand human nature at its best and at its worst; its spirituality and its animal savagery. And, like George Borrow among the gipsies, he imbibed the apt, shortworded, picturesque idiom of the native speech. Synge did not write in verse, but he created



an individual rhythm and harmony of language entirely new, a verbal music unlike any other yet used.

His first play, the brief 'The Shadow of the Glen' (1903), was neither comedy nor tragedy, but the tragicomedy of life as it might reach a climax in "the last cottage at the head of a glen in County Wicklow." All is too real and moving for laughter, too desolately strange for tears, and the wild beauty of the lonely countryside is part of the atmosphere. Then in his next play, 'Riders to the Sea' (1904) he depicts the human tragedy against the background of a cold, grey, hungry sea eating up the lives of the folk. He expressed the purely tragic vision of the way in which the sea claims Maurya's husband, her husband's father and her six sturdy sons. As before, the action is concentrated into one fairly short scene in a cottage. One son, Michael, has but recently been drowned and his clothes are identified as the play begins, but still the last son will make a journey and, before long, he having been knocked over into the sea by his pony and washed out into a vast surf, his body is brought back. The whole atmosphere of the play is surcharged with sombreness and a sense of fatality. The tragedy is extremely poignant since it goes back to primal emotions. We are in the presence of elemental things. Here sea becomes a living force hungry for the lives of the folk. Human beings may be feeble as compared to the vast forces of nature and fate, but their soul is unconquerable. The play, like a Greek tragedy, ends on a note of calmness and resignation with Maurya's utterance, "No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied." The play has the lustre of all immortal tragedies; its effect is not to depress but to uplift the spirit and enrich the soul. And the author of 'Riders to the Sea' could also write a piece of huge absurdity and riotous laughter; like 'The Playboy of the Western World' (1907). In that play the kind of life he saw clearly he presented only too clearly for some of his countrymen, who attacked the play with bitter anger, but its excellence was quickly acknowledged outside Ireland. Here was human nature, simple and crude, cunning and brutal, greedy, spiteful and changeable, but warm in the blood and capable of poetry.

Synge wrote only six plays. If he had lived longer, his work might well have achieved even greater heights than it did, for his career as a dramatist lasted only some six years and he died at the age of thirty-eight. His dramatic work is thus limited but is of such a high order that his place in British drama is assured for all

times to come. Synge had, like Shakespeare, not only a sure dramatic instinct and a keen insight into the motive forces of human character, but also the gift of transmuting pathos and ugliness into poetry and beauty, and the exuberance inseparable from all great geniuses. Like Shakespeare, again, he never moralises; he is a dramatist pure and simple.

### The Repertory movement :

The provincial repertory theatre in England, like the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, owed its inception to Miss. Horniman, who has been called "the mother of the twentieth-century English drama". Since 1907 the provincial repertory theatre has become an important feature of both English and American theatrical life as producing centres for intellectual playwrights and training school for actors. "For over twelve years", says A. W. Ward, "Miss Horniman's company set a standard for the rest of the theatrical world." The Year 1907 saw the establishment of the first modern repertory theatre in Great Britain at Manchester. Other theatres notably the Liverpool Playhouse (1911) and Sir Barry Jackson's Birmingham repertory (1913) slowly came into existence.

The Repertory movement not only ended the reign of the profit-loving commercial manager, it also did much for the development of dramatic art. The directors of repertory theatres believed in producing good plays even if they attracted comparatively small audience. Unlike the Irish theatre, the Manchester and other English theatres were not intended to arouse or revive local nationalism, nor were they inspired by the poetic and symbolic aspects of life. In England the drama was highly realistic and intellectual—in line with the work of Ibsen and Shaw. It did much to popularise the drama of ideas and represent the social life both of the rich and the poor of the highly industrialised cities of Manchester and Birmingham. This drama was naturalistic and photographic but a bit serious and grim. The movement produced some good dramatists; the repertory movement of London gave us Granville Barker, mainly a problem playwright and the author of the well-known 'Waste' (1907) and 'The Voysey Inheritance'. The leading dramatists of the Manchester group were Monk house, Brighouse and Stanley Houghton. The finest qualities of Houghton's best work, 'Hindle Wakes' and 'The Younger Generation', are their sincerity and the fidelity with which they portray Lancashire life. Birmingham has thrown up one dramatist of great repute, John Drinkwater,

who is the author of many historical plays, the best of these being 'Abraham Lincoln'. 'Abraham Lincoln' was a new departure, or rather a return to "heroic drama". It set the fashion for dramatized biography, a fashion which Hollywood later copied from the stage. But 'Abraham Lincoln' is something more than dramatized biography; it is the dramatization of a theme. Drinkwater's object was not to present the character of the man Lincoln so much as to illustrate the problem of leadership by an historical instance. Encouraged by the success of 'Abraham Lincoln', he went on to complete a trilogy, handling the same theme again from different angles. His other heroes were Oliver Cromwell and General Robert E. Lee. They were all men who were not born for leadership. They were just ordinary men who had leadership thrust upon them by circumstance of war. They were all inspired by a high moral ideal and an unshakable loyalty to what they believed to be their duty. These plays were pregnant sermons for the times, and the public, flushed with post-war idealism, was in the mood to listen to sermons, even in the theatre.

#### **Comedy after the First World War :**

In 1914 the war inevitably checked the development of the drama. After the war, people wanted relief from reality and relaxation by humour, colour and music, and theatrical managers catered for what they thought to be their needs. Indeed it was no time for the social themes of Galsworthy and the Manchester dramatists. These post-war years thus caused a temporary decline in the fortunes of the serious, intellectual drama. The "Cocktail Drama" ousted the intellectual drama from professional theatres. After the war the revue, the musical comedy and the farce became immensely popular. Outstanding popular successes were the two revues at the Alhambra, 'The Bing Boys Are Here' (1916) and 'The Bing Boys on Broadway' (1918), and the spectacular and tuneful 'Chu Chin Chow', all of which had long runs. From the Irish dramatists some good work came, including Lennox Robinson's comedy 'The white-headed Boy' and Lord Dunsany's comedy 'A Night at an Inn', both in 1916, while St. John Ervine's earlier written 'John Ferguson' was produced at the Abbey Theatre in 1915. An older dramatist was revealed greater powers than before was Somerset Maugham, who passed on from his earlier competent melodramas and farces to plays that cut deeper into life and exposed it with biting satire. Among his plays were 'The Circle' (1921), 'Our Betters' (1923), and

'The Constant Wife' (1927). His work was the comedy of manners at its best, reproducing as naturally as possible current social behaviour.

**Noel Coward :**

But alongside the older dramatists there came forward a new generation of playwrights, outstanding among whom were Noel Coward and Sean O' Casey. Noel Coward, born in 1899, had the theatre in his blood. His unerring sense of theatrical effect, his wit and dance of dialogue, his sparkling presentation of the hurly burly of the bright young moderns and their disillusioned and fantastic elders delighted play-goers in play after play. His earlier plays include 'The Young Idea' (1922), 'The Vortex' (1923), 'Fallen Angels' and 'Hay Fever' both in 1925, and 'Private Lives' (1930). By these and other pieces he had, by his own brilliant talents created the legend of the "hectic and nervy" twenties, when morals had been thrown to the winds and human marionettes danced fantastically away from reality.

The characters created by Noel Coward, pitiful seekers after a good time, drinking and flirting to ward off boredom, were in their own persons a sufficient criticism of the post war futility which certainly existed, and in leaving them to condemn themselves and in letting them excuse themselves on the ground that their parents were responsible for the existing state of things, Coward gave the appearance of to some extent sympathising with the dilemma of the young. Nicky in 'The Vortex' indeed suffers so genuinely that he wins a good deal of our sympathy, and he is given a plausible case to state when he says to his mother, "You've wanted love always—passionate love, because you are made like that—it's not your fault—it's the fault of circumstances and civilization—civilization makes rottenness so much easier—we're utterly rotten—both of us—We swirl about in a vortex of beastliness."

In the thirties Coward continued to present the a-moral world of the twenties after its day was really over, as in 'Design for Living' (1933). But his ever experimental talent also produced the patriotic pageant play 'Cavalcade' (1931), which matched the changing spirit of the times. Among his later plays the perfect farce, 'Blithe Spirit' (1941), makes one of his happiest achievements.

**Sean O' Casey :**

Sean O' Casey, the other outstanding new dramatist of the twenties, was very different from Noel Coward. An Irishman

of genius, he was a worthy successor to Synge. His background, however, was not the Aran Islands but the slums of Dublin, crowded noisy tenements where woman quarrelled and loafers drank, and the tragic violence of civil war was ever at hand. With altogether remarkable success he handled with penetrating power events still fresh in the memory of all. 'The Shadow of a Gunman', produced at the Abbey Theatre in 1923, showed a girl and a young poet caught tragically in a typical military raid in 1920 on a tenement whose inhabitants were suspected of Republican activities. 'Juno and the Paycock' (1924) had its setting in 1922, and again the final scene brings violent death out of civil hatred, the "execution" of a young man by his Republican comrades for treachery, a doom which has haunted him in anticipation from the opening of the play. In 'The Plough and the Stars' (1926) the scene was laid further back, in Easter 1916, when the new violence first broke loose in Dublin, but its theme was the same, the cruel and brutal folly of civil war.

Like Synge, O' Casey did not directly preach in these plays, though their consistent presentation of one theme made their very objectivity a sermon in dramatic form. Indeed like Synge, he gave his characters their own lives, which seem predestined from within and not by their creator. In general they are crude, pitiable, weak, comic creatures speaking a rich lingo of the Dublin slums, in whose very richness there is poetry. Few writers have so intimately fused realism and pathos, tragedy and comedy, for his world is a basically comic one whose atmosphere is a sky laden with fate ever ready to strike almost at random, and therefore it is a most pitiable world.

On the whole in these plays O' Casey takes no side, but let the various points of view come appropriately from the characters. He held up Galsworthy's lantern, and let it shine "on fair and foul, no more, no less." But in 'Silver Tassie' (1929) he suddenly abandoned the objectivity which was so remarkable in his earlier plays and attacked his subject...the story of a football player who returns from the war a hero, but paralysed from the waist downward...with a passionate bitterness. In his later plays he began to mix symbolism with realism, to rely less on story and to employ a literary speech as well as the rich dialect of his Dublin slums. As a result his later plays had less effect than his earlier ones,



**The American Theatre :**

It was not just before the First World War that the little Theatre movement reached America. In 1910 the New York stage remained as unaffected by modern tendencies and thought as the London stage of 1895. The speculators who controlled the New York theatres wanted quick returns and were in no wise minded to gamble on the intellectual drama. In 1913 the first independent theatres were opened. One of them—Washington Square Players—afterward, became the now famous Theatre Guild of New York and acquired a tremendous influence on the development of first rate drama. Simultaneously self-styled Art Theatres, Little Theatres, and Theatre Guilds sprang up all over America. Ten years later, in 1925, nearly two thousand of these Little Theatres were affiliated as a Drama League.

**Eugene O' Neill :**

It was not one of these small independent ventures that gave Eugene O' Neill his first chance of production. By 1918 he had written a series of one-act plays for the Province town players. They were little more than realistic sketches—mostly of sailor and water-front life—born of his experiences at sea, but they at once revealed his force and instinct for the theatre. His genius was quickly recognized. But after 'Anna Christie' O' Neill decided to abandon realism. Perhaps he thought the possibilities of realistic drama were exhausted. Whatever the reason, after 1922 O' Neill embarked on a variety of experiments which are of great interest as pointers to the future development of the drama. He has revived the old conventions and attempted new. He has resuscitated the aside and the soliloquy. He has employed the Chorus of the ancient classical drama. In 'The Hairy Ape'—a symbolic picture of the working class—he makes use of a stylized speech. In 'Strange Interlude' he tries to reveal the workings of the subconscious mind by coupling asides indicative of what the characters are thinking to the dialogue which they are speaking.

He has not only let his mind be coloured by almost every trend of modern thought, but he tried to find dramatic expression for the philosophical and scientific theories of contemporary thinkers. 'Mourning Becomes Electra' is an elaborate study in the Freudian doctrine. His interest in psycho—analysis has imbued his later work; just as his interest in mysticism tinctures post-realistic plays.

O' Neill is always venturesome, always interesting and provocative of thought. If at times we find him incomprehensible or even ludicrous we must reflect that obscurity is one of the risks attendant on the use of a new medium. At his best O' Neill displays astonishing dramatic force and emotional reality. His plays are definitely of the theatre, but they are stimulating reading. The main objections to the modern realist drama are that it lacked colour, poetry, and tragic elevation. O' Neill has tried to remedy these faults. Most of his plays will pass the final test of a great play: that besides providing an entertainment it gives its audience an experience.

### **Experimentation of Priestley and James Bridie :**

The nineteen-thirties saw the appearance of two new dramatists of distinction, J. B. Priestley and James Bridie. While still writing novels, Priestley followed up a dramatisation of his 'Good Companions' with a series of original plays. Sometimes he kept to the normal presentation on character and circumstance as in 'Laburnum Grove' (1933) or indulged in pure farcical comedy as in 'When We are Married' (1938). From the beginning he was ambitious to develop his own kind of play. He wanted to present ideas about life, to wake up his audiences to the possibilities of their altering their lives for the better. His first play, 'Dangerous Corner' (1932), developed the simple truth that at any point in ordinary human affairs there may always be alternative developments possible. So he expressed the mysterious risks in life, the lurking "might-have-been" which is the shadow of actuality. In 'Time and the Conways' (1937) he illuminated the old truth that what we shall be is implicit and discernible years earlier in what we are. 'I Have Been Here Before' (1937), as its title suggests, used the theory of human life as a cycle of reincarnation. Again, in 'Johnson Over Jordan' (1939) Priestley made his audience think beyond the limits of life in time as we know it. In Tibetan religion there is a state after death, called Bardo, and in that strange world Priestley places most of his play. But Priestley was less interested in the material than in finding an entirely new method. He had made efforts to "cheat realism" as he says, before; and now he was determined "to bring in everything the theatre could do for me, including some ballet and plenty of good music." His aim was to make the play a "searching experience." He copied O' Neill's use of masks; he borrowed all the known tricks of expressionism. And

by employing a 'heightened speech', he attempted to 'break away from the flavourless patter of modern realistic dialogue.' In 'The Linden Tree' (1947), however, Priestley went back to the normal world and a straightforward treatment, and succeeded in presenting a firm, finely characterised drama, richly suggestive in its appreciation of the problem of life.

James Bridie was a more truly original dramatist than Priestley. His first plays were written for the Birmingham Repertory, and we must reckon him a product of the intellectual Little Theatre. He is a curious mixture of intellectual and romantic. His dramatic ancestry derives from Shaw on the one side and from Barrie on the other. He is as fond of talk as G. B. S., and there is in his make-up something of the Boy-who-would-not-grow-up. His plays are a synthesis of dialectics and school boyish fantasy, but his whimsy reaches a maturer stage of growth than Barrie's.

Two of his earlier plays were dramatization of the Biblical stories of Jonah and the whale and Tobias and the angel; in one of his more recent, 'Mr. Bolfray' (1943), he conjures up the Devil in a Scottish manse, which gives occasion for an orgy of theological argument. His favourite heroes are argumentative and pugilistic. Indeed his great characteristics were his versatility, his wide, lively intellectual interest and his power of holding an audience by his stage craft even when they were baffled by his ideas.

Perhaps because he was a doctor he was more interested in analysis of character than in strict plot development. He was conscious of the difficulty which Yeats had deplored of making modern educated people reveal their thoughts naturally on the stage. In his attempts to solve this problem he made use of that old-fashioned aid to exposition, the soliloquy. In 'The Black Eye' he let his hero, quite successfully, explain himself between the scenes directly to the audience as Shakespeare had done at the beginning of 'Richard II'. And he made ingenious use of the discovery that the one occasion on which modern, educated people do talk naturally, freely, and without inhibition is when they are under the influence of drink.

He was an intellectual without being a bore. Plain people could enjoy, even if some remained rather puzzled, the clash of ideas and personalities out of which he fashioned drama. The title of one of his volumes of collected plays, 'Plays for Plain People' (1944) was no misnomer. 'True characterisation, wit,



comedy, lively talk, a whimsical but shrewd and agile mind, allied to a natural and imaginative talent for the theatre, will ensure the continued life of his work." (Dr. A. S. Collins).

### **Revival of Poetic Drama :**

Now it is one of axioms of drama that the theatre is an emotional medium. Since it is verse which can touch the deepest chords of heart, dramatists have used verse as the medium of drama since times immemorial. But in the modern age on account of the prevalence of realistic and naturalistic types of drama, the tradition of verse plays disappeared. In fact the tradition of poetic drama began to disappear gradually after the Elizabethan age and at the beginning of the twentieth century the tradition was long dead. Attempts to revive it in the nineteenth century failed because the poets (Shelley, Tennyson, and Browning) who wrote blank verse dramas were not playwrights. But Yeats was not alone in believing that a return to poetic drama was the only way to deintellectualize the theatre and to give it back its full emotional scope. Yet inspite of a certain limited success due to the peculiar circumstances of the Celtic revival he failed to prove his point. The Irish Theatre Movement changed, as Yeats himself admitted, "from poetic to realistic drama, from imaginative interpretation of remote theories to objective study of what was immediately to hand."

### **Stephen Phillips :**

In the first years of the century the blank verse plays of Stephen Phillips enjoyed a certain vogue. He produced five poetical plays between 1900 and 1908. His main works are 'Herod', 'Ulysses', 'Nero', 'Faust' and 'Paolo and Francesca'. He had a considerable instinct for the theatre, but was, inspite of some fine passages, only a second-rate poet. So he could not create a public demand for a revival of poetic drama.

### **John Drinkwater and Masefield :**

Among the modern poets who have attempted to recreate an interest in poetic drama two must be mentioned : John Drinkwater and John Masefield. Drinkwater, warned by Galsworthy that "the shadow of the man Shakespeare was across the path of all who should attempt verse drama in these days", wisely did not invite comparison by using blank verse or essaying five-act tragedies as Stephen Phillips had done. He produced four poetic plays

between 1911 and 1916, but used both verse and prose in them. Finally he gave up poetic drama altogether and wrote only in prose.

Masefield chose at first biblical and historical subjects and experimented with various lyric metres including the rhymed couplet, but he finally evolved a poetic idiom in prose. Like Synge, he forged a new pattern of rhythmic speech, terse, figurative, and rooted in the soil. His theory of tragedy led him to choose subjects which are essentially sordid crimes. His theory of the purging effect of terror and pity was not original, but he makes the mistake of insisting upon the audience seeing the dreadful acts. 'The Campden Wonder' is harrowing rather than tragic. But 'Nan', a story of peasant cruelty, has a certain tragic grandeur, and though written in prose is essentially poetic.

**J. E. Flecker :**

The only other poetic play since Stephen Phillips which achieved any measure of commercial success or stands out as memorable play was 'Hassan', by James Elroy Flecker. 'Hassan' (1923) is an oriental fantasy, sparkling with wit and richly visual imagery and Eastern hyperbole, comic and sadistically macabre. It is written in highly coloured prose but is unmistakably throughout the work of a poet.

**T. S. Eliot :**

However, it was left for T. S. Eliot to realise the full possibilities of poetic drama. The success of the 'Murder in the Cathedral' (1935) has done much to cancel the prejudice against poetic plays. The high spirituality of this work, the example of its beautiful choruses and its blending of mysticism and realistic humour, have struck the public all over the world. Its chosen medium, a language familiar or elevated at will, and its varying measure, equally fit for dialogues or for flights of lyrical sublimity have set a lesson of dramatic intensity and poetical inspiration that will be long active in English drama. The poetical plays which have come since 1935 -- 'Murder' in the Cathedral (1935), 'Family Reunion' (1939), 'Cocktail Party' (1949), Confidential Clerk (1953), and 'The Elder Statesman' (1958), show him to have moved away, from even ecclesiastical tradition to a deep ritualistic pagan faith. "The austerity of Eliot's philosophy, his concentrated pessimism, his frank conveyance of religious and moral lesson, appealed to emotions that will be felt by the most sophisticated audience; and the

resolute effort to keep the hard happenings of life in the atmosphere and tone of perfect simplicity, better solves the problem of a with unlimited range." (Cazamian).

### Christopher Fry:

A rising dramatist, master of vivid and telling verse drama, and one of the brightest stars in the universe of contemporary drama is Christopher Fry whose work illustrates the new vitality of the poetic medium. In Fry's *Lady's Not For Burning* (1948) a lively and almost irresistible display of extravagance burst upon the public, who responded with enthusiasm. The verse is loose, pedestrian, but sudden flights of poetry soar in the sheer midst of prose. *Venus Observed* (1950) has more weight with a modern plot of original and somewhat unreal quality. Brilliant verbal feats and metaphysical concepts interrupt passages of quite popular flavour.

The achievement of Fry is both technical and comprehensive. As with Noel Coward the theatre seems in his blood, and he can conceive plot, situation and dialogue in the way that excites and holds an audience; his verse is born for speech, rising and falling, alive with wit and vivid with imagery. Plot and speech alike renounce the naturalism which had reigned so long since Ibsen put his stamp on modern drama. Instead we have a conception of comedy that harmonises with that of Shakespeare in a play like *'Much Ado'*, where through romantic improbability we are given the fundamental reality of human heart. Indeed *'Venus Observed'* brings its characters face to face with themselves in a way close to Shakespeare's handling of Benedick and Beatrice and of Jacques and of Duke in *'Twelfth Night'*: sham and selfishness are stripped bare with ironic sympathy. Above all, one feels behind and through these last two plays of Fry's a positive, healthy view of life. To Fry life is a joyous miracle; faith in God supports the old values of love, beauty and goodness, and, where man errs, there can be forgiveness and redemption. There is a spiritual assurance behind the laughter, a solidity beneath the dazzling surface of the plays.

### Future of the Drama :

These are the main types and tendencies of modern drama. Though the momentum of dramatic revival has not kept up a uniform pace during the century, its future is not dark. What it will be in the years to come is not altogether impossible to visualise. One can only guess what form the new drama will assume when it eventually finds its equilibrium. Priestley is not alone in thinking

that it will be more closely allied to music and the ballet. One thing is sure; it must recover some of the things that it has lost, obvious beauties of romance and beauty. It may be as Galsworthy predicted, lyrical, and its province "to describe the elemental soul of man and the forces of nature with beauty and the spirit of discovery;" It will most likely be a 'swing-back' of the pendulum that oscillates eternally between Romance and Realism.

**A Brief Synopsis :**

1. After a long period of decline true drama was reborn towards the end of the nineteenth century.

2. General features of modern drama are predominance of realism, intellectualism, the use of prose as the medium of expression, class symbolism, democratic tone and elaborate stage directions.

3. Robertson, Pinero and H. A. Jones are the pioneers of modern drama. They tried to lay emphasis on realism both in subject matter and technique.

4. The person who infused the real revolutionary blood into British drama was Ibsen, a Norwegian playwright. The Ibsenian play is always a play of ideas. The real Ibsen spirit was imported into British Drama by G. B. Shaw. He was a great moralist and realist.

5. Granville Barker and John Galsworthy are the great exponent of naturalism which means an attempt to present "both fair and foul, no more no less." Most of Galsworthy's plays belong to social type of tragedy. His plays are problem plays marked with a deep humanitarian note.

6. J. M. Barrie in his play makes a return to romance, 'Peter Pan' is his masterpiece.

7. The Irish Movement aimed at deintellectualizing the theatre, Yeats devoted his genius to the creation of symbolic drama with lyrical spontaneity. Another important dramatist who wrote about Irish subjects was J. M. Synge,

8. The Repertory Movement in England espoused the cause of realism and intellectualism.

9. After the Ist World War comedy and farce became popular. Noel Coward and Sean O' Casey are the prominent comic playwright of the twenties.

10. Among the American playwrights who made notable contribution to British drama the name of Eugene O' Neill stands out most prominently.

11. The nineteen-thirties saw the appearance of two new dramatists of distinction, J. B. Priestley and James Bridie. Both of them were untiring experimentalists.

12. Another important trend in modern drama is the revival of poetic drama. Among the important verse dramatists are Stephen Phillips, John Drinkwater, John Masefield, Flecker, T. S. Eliot and Christopher Fry,

13. The future of drama is not dark. The coming future will most likely be a swing back of the pendulum that oscillates eternally between romance and realism.

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## Shakespearean Comedy

Comedy has chosen strange companions. It can yoke itself in service with morality or sentiment, or it can disport with folly and fancy. It suits itself to a caustic censorship of manners or adds savour to the idealism of lovers. It is a welcome relief and relaxation from anything over serious or taxing.

### Shakespearean Comedy Contrasted with Classical Comedy :

It is a commonplace of criticism to label Shakespeare's comedies romantic comedies. Romantic comedy is pre-eminently the comedy of love. Shakespeare and his fellows were romantic in the strict sense that they clamoured for fuller draughts of that spirit of Romanticism which the Middle Ages had first discovered in their tales of chivalry and knight-errantry. The love of woman was a state of mystic adoration removed entirely from the attraction of the flesh. It is this specific occupation with wooing which distinguishes Shakespeare's comedies from classical or Roman comedy of Plautus and Terence. The outstanding feature of the whole body of Roman comedy is that whilst it is full of sex, it is almost entirely devoid of love. Most of the plots of Roman dramatists are intrigues in pursuit of a woman. Plautus is full of sex; Shakespeare is all for love. Plautus weaves plots of intrigues; Shakespeare chooses simple tales of wooers and their wooing. "It was a lover and his lass." In Shakespearean comedy it is the young folk who occupy the centre of his stage, and the hero, gaining grace in the mysteries of wooing, discards many of the traces of his Plautine ancestor, and replaces them by the finer susceptibilities of feeling, the nobility of mind, and the sweetness of soul which more closely reflect the romantic ideal of manhood. An even greater change is suffered by the girls of the older tradition. They are transmuted both in quality and in significance. The heroine gradually takes on a personality and acquires qualities of heart and of head which are at length to be embodied most magisterially in a Rosalind, a Beatrice, a Portia or a Viola. For them the heroine has in fact become the very incarnation of the spirit of Shakespearean comedy.

Classical comedies were written with the purpose of exposing offences against social decorum by rendering the offenders ridiculous,



But Shakespeare's comedies are essentially and obviously different from traditional classical comedy. Their main characters arouse admiration; they excite neither scorn nor contempt. They inspire us to be happy with them; they do not merely cajole us into laughing at them. Classical comedy is conservative. Its members are assumed to be fully aware of the habits and morals which preserve an already attained state of general well-being. But Shakespearean comedy does not assume that the conditions and requisites of man's welfare have been certainly established. Its heroes and heroines are voyagers in pursuit of a happiness, not yet attained, a brave new world wherein a man's life may be fuller, his sensations more exquisite and his joys more widespread "Hence", observes Prof. G. B. Charlton, "Shakespearean comedy is not finally satiric; it is poetic. It is that conservative; it is creative. The way of it is that of the imagination rather than that of pure reason. It is an artist's vision, not a critic's exposition."

#### Early romantic comedies :

It was in the field of comedy that the young Shakespeare learned the technique of his craft, and a trio of comedies of the early period, 'The Comedy of Errors', 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona,' and 'Love's Labour's Lost', show him at work experimenting in different types of comedy and practising construction, characterization and dramatic expression. The Error is a good example of a common Elizabethan practice, the adaptation of classical comedy to the contemporary stage. In Love's Labour's Lost' Shakespeare attempts with brilliant success a new type of comedy, one of personal and social satire. In the burlesque part of the play we meet with two favourite characters of caricature of Italian comedy—the Pedant and the Military Broggart. In it the dramatist also laughs at the social follies of his own day, more especially he laughs at the Elizabethan extravagance of language and at the Renaissance parade of learning. The play is a courtly comedy somewhat in the style of Lyly, with all of Lyly's delight in word-play, puns, conceits and far-fetched images. 'The comedy of Errors' is a comedy of incident—almost a farce; 'Love's Labour's Lost' is a comedy of dialogue, 'Two Gentlemen of Verona' is Shakespeare's first attempt at a form in which he was later on to become pre-eminent, romantic comedy dealing primarily with the theme of love. 'A Midsummer Night's Dream is Shakespeare's first complete success in the field of romantic comedy. It is

interesting to note how skilfully Shakespeare has blended in the play the classical, the realistic and the romantic elements of Elizabethan drama.

Of these early comedies in which Shakespeare was experimenting in various directions, no one is quite a masterpiece. Evidence of the novice hand appears in each—here in tediousness of dialogue here in artificial arrangement of figures, here in the faulty construction of the plot, here in feebleness of characterization, here in languor of style, here in undramatic development of imagery. It is worth noting how often in this first group of comedies the mirth is derived not from the deeper things of the spirit, but from odd surprises, mistakes of identity, disguises and confusion; in a word from what is external and accidental, rather than from what is ultimately related with character. But each of these plays contains something admirable, something which no writer of the time except Shakespeare could have created. Taken together they make up a great achievement for a poet's early years and give unmistakable prediction of the higher work which is to follow.

#### **Recoil from romance :**

It was probably while he was at work in the English historical plays that Shakespeare made his recast of the old 'Taming of a Shrew'. It was Shakespeare's recoil from romance. It is not a great play but it bears witness to his skill in construction, to his sense of fun and farcical situations. The scenes dealing with Petruchio and Katherine—a very enjoyable whirlwind in petticoats—are in his best veins of lively comedy. The Merry Wives of Windsor was an offshot from 'King Henry IV'. Both parts of 'Henry IV' are comedy as well as history. The comedy of Falstaff is continued in a broad, noisy prose in 'The Merry Wives'. But Falstaff here is not the true Falstaff, the old Sir John, master of every situation in which he found himself, he is like a person recalled to the stage to perform an unaccustomed and ungracious part. The humour of both plays has something in common with that of the lower scenes of the later English histories. It would seem as if Shakespeare carried over into Comedy some of the roughness and realism of the comic part of the historical drama into which necessarily the romantic could never enter. The Merry Wives' is the one example in Shakespeare's work of bourgeois comedy, written in the realistic, satirical mood which was becoming popular towards the end of the country.



**Consummation attained :**

'The Merchant of Venice' is the first of Shakespeare's greater romantic comedies. It represents an abundance in Shakespeare's art and a deepening of his outlook on life. It is a serious study of certain aspects of human life, of love and marriage, of the use and abuse of wealth. The story of the caskets and the story of the pound of flesh are skilfully intertwined. The figure of Shylock presents one most interesting critical problem. Shakespeare's Shylock is a very different character from Marlowe's Jew, at once more dramatically effective and more truly human than the monster Barabas. Portia is one of the most shining stars among the galaxy of Shakespeare's heroines. Her grace and charm, the qualities of head and heart, her gay humour and sparkling wit. give the play an unforgettable charm.

A trio of plays called the joyous comedies concludes the period of great comedies 'Much Ado About Nothing', 'As You Like It' and 'Twelfth Night' are the sunniest of Shakespeare's comedies. The first is in some ways Shakespeare's comic masterpiece. Beatrice and Benedick are Shakespearean's creation or rather his recreation in more perfect form of the reluctant witty lovers—Rosaline and Biron in Love's Labour's Lost. Dogberry and Verges climb to a height of sapient stupidity and majestic ineptitude which borders on the sublime. 'As You Like It' is the gayest and the most delightful of Shakespeare's comedies. Its charm lies largely in the woodland atmosphere of the Forest of Arden in which the greater part of the action is laid, and not a little in the group of lovable persons who meet and make love, or laugh at love's follies under the greenwood tree. In Rosalind we have the most charming of Shakespeare's heroines, in Touchstone the wittiest of Shakespeare's court fools and in Jacques we meet for the first time in Shakespeare's plays the satirist of humanity. 'Twelfth Night', the last of the trio is, in some ways, the most nearly perfect of the three. Less poetical than 'As You Like It', less witty than 'Much Ado', it is a perfect blend of romance and realism and is full of admirable fooling and good sentimentality. Viola is the most lovable of Shakespeare's heroines; Sir Toby Belch, a figure of the family of Falstaff; Sir Andrew, the most hopeless simpleton Shakespeare ever drew; and "sick of self love" Malvolvio, the perfect picture of the over-weaning Jack in office. The play has the gaiety and the good sense of the best comedies of Moliere, with a

tenderness and romantic beauty which lay beyond the art of the French dramatist.

'Much Ado', 'Twelfth Night' and 'As You Like' it may be regarded as Shakespeare's greatest triumphs in comedy. They are the consummation of a process of growth in the art of comedy. Therefore, in them Shakespeare's comic idea, his vision of the reach of human happiness in the world of men and women, is richer, deeper and more sustained, and more satisfying than in any other of his plays. They are also, technically speaking, his happiest examples of the characteristically Elizabethan kind of romantic comedy, the plays in which he most fully satisfies the curiously Elizabethan aesthetic demand for a drama which would gratify both the romantic and the comic instincts of his audience.

#### The Dark Comedies :

The three comedies, 'All's Well That Ends Well', 'Measure for Measure' and 'Troilus and Cressida,' usually known as bitter or dark comedies, belong to the period of great tragedies. Their underlying mood is that of bitter cynicism. The sunshine and frolic of Twelfth Night and As You Like It have disappeared; there is something forced in the laughter. The strong-willed heroine of 'All's Well, is a figure almost suited to tragedy. Measure For Measure' is more than grave; it would be dark were it not illuminated by the white light of Isabella's chastity. Troilus and Cressida' is both dark and bitter. Life lies before use like an unweeded garden, "things renk and gross in nature possess it merely." The dog-like Thersites rails at all that we had supposed noble. This is not a comedy gone astray, but a satire on human existence thrown into dramatic form. These dark comedies are half tragic and half playful. There are happenings in them that would more suitably adorn "the buskined stage". They may be considered as leading the way towards the romances of later years, although they are all nearer in form to As You Like It than to 'The Winter's Tale'.

#### Shakespeare's comic muse X-rayed : Fantasy and Realism :

It is a common place of criticism to label Shakespeare's comedies as romantic comedies. Though the background and atmosphere in these plays is generally romantic and utopian, yet life keeps hovering over it. By implicit touches Shakespeare induces in us "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which

constitutes poetic faith". Characters and scenes alike are viewed through magic casements which transform reality. The settings are all imaginative—an unhistorical France; Ephesus, Thebes, Arden, Illyria and Venice—each one conceived in the glow of a strange and beautiful fancy. But though the ultimate world of Shakespeare's comedy is romantic, poetic and imaginative, it is by no means unsubstantial and fantastic. "The Forest of Arden", to quote A. Nicoll, "is no conventional Arcadia. Its inhabitants are not exempt from the penalty of Adam. Winter, rough weather, the reason's differences, the icy fang and cheerful chiding of the winter's wind invade Arcadia of ours." There are contemporary figures and contemporary fashions in *Love's Labour's Lost*; Bottom and his companions mingle with the fairies; Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek are companions of Viola and Olivia, Dogberry and Verges of Hero and Beatrice. This is the cardinal characteristic of Shakespeare's romantic world—the union of realism and fantasy.

#### Love—the presiding genius :

But it is not only in its geographical atmosphere that the world of these comedies is so vastly larger than that of classical comedy; in its own turn the world of the spirit has been equally extended. Song and music irradiate these plays.

"If music be the food of love, play on." Man was discovering the validity of his intuitions and emotions—he was becoming intellectually aware that the tumultuous condition which followed his falling in love and urged him on to woo, was in fact no mean and mainly physical manifestation of his personality, it was in fact the awakening in him of the fuller capacities of his spirit. So amongst the themes of Elizabethan comedy, love had justified its primacy. It was the touchstone by which fine spirits were stuck to their finest issues. It was also, of course, a test by which weaker mortals revealed their weakness, grosser ones their grossness, and foolish ones their folly. Hence, love rightly took its place in Shakespearean comedy as the recognized presiding Genius. Rosalind, Viola, and to a less extent Beatrice are Shakespeare's images of the best way of love. They, and the men in whom they inspire love, are Shakespeare's representation of the office of love to lift mankind to a richer life. So by the entry into it of love, not only has the world of these comedies become a bigger world, the men and women who inhabit it have become finer and richer representations of human nature.

**No Heroes but only Heroines :**

Shakespeare's enthronement of woman as queen of comedy is no mere accident, and no mere gesture of conventional gallantry. She is a lively symbol of the new state of affairs in the domain of comedy. The hero is dethroned losing not only his rank but something of his personality; he has been replaced by the heroine. "Shakespeare has no heroes but only heroines" wrote Ruskin. The heroes of these comedies are pygmies compared in stature with the heroines. Because they are women, these heroines have attributes of personality fitting them more certainly than men to shape the world towards happiness. His menfolk, a Hamlet, or a Macbeth or an Othello, may have a subtler intellect, a more penetrating imagination or a more irresistible passion. These heroes in effect, are out of harmony with themselves, and so are fraught with certainty of tragic doom. Their personality is a mass of mighty forces out of equipoise; they lack the balance of a durable spiritual organism. Comedy is life seen in its equilibrium. Tragedy is that equilibrium overthrown. It was in women that Shakespeare found this equipoise, this balance. In his women hand and head and heart are fused in a vital and practicable union. Their essential femininity gave his heroines their first claim to rulership in comedy.

**Dramatic revelation of a comic idea :**

It must be noted that though these romantic comedies break through the traditional scope of classical comedy, their sphere is rigorously confined within the proper orbit of comedy. They limit themselves to acquaintance with life here and now; the world and not eternity is their stage. In these ripest of Shakespeare's comedies, comedy is seeking in its own artistic way to elucidate the moral art of securing happiness by translating the stubbornness of fortune into a quiet and sweet existence. This art comes most easily to those who by nature are generous, guiltless and of a free disposition, just in deed, as are Shakespeare's heroines. It finds the art crippled in those who lack the general sense of fellowship with mankind. Malvolio, "sick of self love", has lost the art of life. The foundation of a lasting happiness is the gift of intuitive sympathy, and the habit of tolerance and forbearance. "But now abideth, faith, hope and love, these three; and the greatest of these is love." This is what life is taken to be in Shakespeare's comedies.

**Fountain of sweet and sympathetic humour :**

Aristotle defined comedy as the picture of the laughable. Like the humour of classical comedies. Shakespearean humour is

not directed to the exposure of absurdity or inconsistency. Shakespeare's comedy touch the springs of finest laughter and keeps the heart sweet. Unlike the comedies of French dramatists Shakespeare's comedy is full of sympathetic, kind and humane laughter. The French draw their laughter from situations; the English, at their best, from characters. Shakespeare's comic characters—Falstaff and his fellowmen—illustrate this spirit of joy and joviality :

“Because thou art virtuous shall there be no more cakes and ale.”

Such is the tolerant, good natured and magnanimous comic music of Shakespeare. “It is”, as Prof. Dowden beautifully puts it, “like the play of summer lightning, which hurts no living creature, but surprises, illuminates and charms.”

His wit may dazzle, but it will not blind; it may sharpen, but it never wounds. So it is with his soul of humour, and even in the earlier plays, where like Henry with Falstaff it yet dallies with wit, the lesson it teaches is a plain one and should be learnt by all of us—“that to laugh is of more profit than to weep, and that to sneer even at folly is the mark of a fool; but to smile on the weakness of humanity till it smiles on itself and is healed, may be a wiseman's pastime and his honour.

Romantic comedy is Shakespeare's unique achievement in comedy. He has built on the foundations of old classical comedy of satire and manner a new comedy of romance and love. In Shakespeare's high comedy the tradition and technique of classical comedy with its satiric condemnation of all aberration from a materialistic social form, is transformed into something new and lively—atonce the promise and perfection of a more abundant life—into a comedy that expands, not contracts the heart. It raises no problems, it sweetens our feeling towards humanity : it lures us away to the restful land of romance.

#### A Brief Synopsis :

1. Complex character of comedy.
2. Shakespeare's comedies are romantic comedies. The love of woman as a mystic state of adoration removed entirely from the attraction of the flesh is the distinguishing feature of Shakespearean comedy. Classical comedies are full of sex; Shakespeare is all for love. Classical comedies aim at exposing offences against



social decorum. Shakespearean comedy is not fully satiric; it is poetic. It is an artist's vision not a critic's exposition.

3. 'The Comedy of Errors', 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona' and 'Love's Labour's Lost' are his early romantic comedies. Evidence of the novice hand appears in each.

4. 'Taming of a Shrew' is Shakespeare's recoil from romance. The Merry Wives of Windsor is an offshot from 'King Henry IV'. It is an example of bourgeois comedy, written in the realistic satirical mood.

5. 'The Merchant of Venice' is the first of greater romantic comedies. 'Much Ado About Nothing', 'As You Like It' and 'Twelfth Night' are the sunniest of Shakespeare comedies. They may be regarded as Shakespeare's greatest triumph in comedy.

6. The underlying mood in dark comedies like 'All's Well's is of bitter cynicism.

7. The first cardinal characteristic of Shakespeare's romantic world is the union of fantasy and realism.

8. Love is the presiding genius in all his comedies.

9. "Shakespeare has no heroes but only heroines."

10. His comedies are dramatic revelation of a comic idea.

11. They are the fountain of sweet and sympathetic humour.

12. Romantic comedy is Shakespeare's unique achievement in comedy.

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## Poetic Drama In The Modern Age

The question what poetry does in the drama is much more than a merely technical question. The obvious difference between a verse-dramatist and a prose-dramatist is that the one makes his characters talk verse, the other prose; but that is not the only difference. It is only the outer sign of a profounder difference, a difference of conception of, or approach to, life.

Drama, broadly speaking, is the representation of life on the stage; but it is the imaginative representation and not the photo-

graphic reproduction of life. Hence imitation of life is the common point in all dramas; every dramatist aims at imitating the reality. But reality is of two kinds. There is the sensible reality of deeds and works and the outward gestures. Then there is another kind of reality, the numberless passions and emotions and their finer shades and the spring of motives. This may be called the 'emotional or innermost reality'. The aim of true drama is to convey the sense of this emotional reality, to express the general substance of all existence. Now the great difference between a prose-play and poetry-play is this : the former concentrates its imitation on the 'outermost reality', the second on the 'innermost'. When the chief business of the dramatist is to imitate the outward appearances, the contemporary society, its evils and their criticism etc., we get the prose-play. And when the dramatist's chief aim is not to confine himself to the husk, the outer shell or reality but directly penetrates to the core, the substance of life which is true of all times and places, we get the poetic play.

Now the question arises : what is the ultimate aim of this representation of life on the stage ? Life as it is with all its disorder, conflicting and discordant elements cannot satisfy our desires. The dramatic artist brings forth order out of chaos, produces symphony and concord out of the weltering forces of life. So our fundamental desire is satisfied when we see vague subjectivity put forth into clear, impressive objectivity, and the weltering life turned into a harmonious symbol of life. "So life cannot satisfy our desire for life, but drama can; and by so doing seem more real than life, and we by witnessing it seem more real ourselves." Therefore, the main importance of drama is to induce us into the realisation of the fact into intense self-consciousness and by giving the picture of 'emotional reality' transports us to that plane where all discordant elements are resolved and life is seen in its essential unity and order. This is the poetic approach to life and in order to have its full effect it must be expressed in poetry. Prose is the unintoxicating utterance of common experiences: in poetry the utterance has been fermented into metre and imagery. "Prose drama", says Abercrombie, "is an adulteration. But, of course, adulterated wine can intoxicate, though not so much handsomely as the pure vintage." Therefore, in order to clothe the poetic vision of life poetry is the befitting and natural medium of drama, and to use spoken poetry as the vehicle of drama is only to obey the fundamental laws of dramatic conception and its appeal.

Since it is only poetry which can touch the deepest chords of human heart, the dramatist has employed verse as the medium of expression since time immemorial. The verse drama is as old as Greek literature. The ancient drama in all languages had been written in verse. In England also when drama came into being, verse was at once recognized as its proper medium. In blank verse and poetic prose the Elizabethans found the perfect media for the expression of their dramatic conception, whether comic or tragic. These two forms were carried to a height by Marlowe and Shakespeare. Here we may note that the Elizabethan prose speech was itself far more richly patterned and far more poetical and figurative than is the ordinary prose of modern times. Blank verse and poetic prose were provided with additional modifications by the writers of the early seventeenth century. After the century, however, two things happened. The Elizabethans had done so much with blank verse, had set so high a model that later dramatists simply imitated their style. Blank verse ceased to be truly creative, it lost its original freshness and became imitative. At the same time ordinary prose utterance gradually but surely lost its richness and poetic appeal. Thus there came an abrupt chasm between the common colloquial speech and the imitative blank verse. To this must be added the fact that from 1860 onward spectators and actors were being trained in appreciation of new naturalistic forms, with the result that, first, the stage was left without a sufficient number of actors capable adequately of interpreting poetic dialogue, and second, that modern audiences came to have both distrust of, and a distaste for, the purely poetic drama.

In the beginning of the modern age people were possessed by a strong desire to get as close to life as possible. Hence the drama ceased to be the representation of 'emotional reality' and was used as a vehicle of social criticism. With the prevailing of the naturalistic style and with the endeavour to utilize the serious drama for the purpose of expressing ideas concerning the fundamental problem of contemporary social life, it was but natural that the poetic play should cease to have as much significance. Shaw, Galsworthy and Granville Barker were the chief protagonists of intellectual drama. The use of powerful and charming language was distrusted; the outpourings of soul were dubbed as sentimental gush.

But a romantic reaction to naturalism is to be found in almost all European countries during this period and the realistic

theatre of Ibsen displays an increasing tendency towards the imaginatively fantastic and towards the symbolic. The dramatist and the audience felt a strong desire to escape from the naturalistic style. Yeats was not alone in believing that a return to poetic drama was the only way to deintellectualize the theatre and to give it back its full emotional scope. Yet in spite of a certain limited success due to the peculiar circumstances of Celtic revival, he failed, to prove his point. The Irish theatre movement changed, as Yeats himself admitted, "from poetic to realistic drama, from imaginative interpretation of remote theories to objective study of what was immediately to hand."

In the opening years of century the blank verse plays of Stephen Phillips enjoyed a certain vogue. His main works are 'Herod', 'Ulysses', 'Hero', 'Faust' and 'Paolo and Francesca.' Reynolds has denounced Phillips as a simple imitator of Elizabethan rattle. This criticism is not without some validity, when it is applied to 'Herod' and other plays, but it does not at all apply to 'Paolo and Francesca' which has been applauded for its poetic beauty and bewitching charm. Even that confirmed antagonist of poetic drama, William Archer, paid rich tribute to Phillips in the 'Daily Chronicle' when he wrote about this play. "A thing of exquisite poetic form yet tingling from first to last with intense dramatic life Mr. Phillips has achieved the impossible." Though Phillips sought to introduce the old Elizabethan force and fire by the sonority of verse, his poetic plays have a peculiar charm of their own. "He is", says Lynton Hudson, perhaps the nearest approach to the combination of the poet and the dramatist the age has produced, but his plays, though moderately successful, did not create a public demand for a revival of poetic drama.

Among the modern poets who have attempted to recreate an interest in poetic drama two must be mentioned; John Drinkwater and John Masefield. Drinkwater shot into immortality by his great play 'Abraham Lincoln' In 'The Storm', 'The God of Quiet', 'X—O' and 'Cophetua' he established the supremacy of poetical plays over prose comedies. Drinkwater, warned by Galsworthy that "the shadow of the man Shakespeare was across the path of all who should attempt verse drama in these days", wisely did not invite comparison by using blank verse or essaying five-act tragedies as Stephen Phillips had done. The five verse-plays he wrote between 1911 and 1916 were short and lyrical, but he finally abandoned his "attempts to find some constructional idiom whereby verse might be accepted as a natural thing by the

modern audience." He gave to poetic drama a place of dignity and made it a work of art as well as propaganda, particularly in 'X-O' which is a pungent criticism of the destruction brought by wars.

Masefield, like Drinkwater, first tried his hand with plays on Biblical and historical subjects, using various lyric-metres, even the rhymed couplet; but he too ended by seeking to evolve some poetic idiom in prose. His theory of tragedy led him to choose the subjects which are essentially sordid rustic crimes. "Tragedy", he wrote in his preface to "Nan", "at its best is a vision. The heart of life can only be laid bare in the agony and exaltation of dreadful acts. The vision of agony or spiritual contest pushed beyond the limits of dying personalities, is exalting and cleansing." This theory of the purging effect of terror and pity was not original, but Masefield makes the mistake of insisting upon the audience seeing the dreadful acts. The Campdon wonder is harrowing rather than tragic. But 'Nan', a story of peasant cruelty, has a certain tragic grandeur and survives stage production as none of his other plays has done, and though written in prose is essentially poetic.

Since Stephen Phillips the only other play which achieved any measure of commercial success or stands out as a memorable play was 'Hassan' by James Elory Flecker. Flecker wrote it before the war of 1914-18, but production was delayed till 1933, eight years after the poet's early death. 'Hassan' is an oriental fantasy, sparkling with wit and richly visual imagery and Eastern hyperbole, comic and sadistically macabre. It is written in highly coloured prose, but is unmistakably throughout the work of a poet.

Among others who have tried to resuscitate poetic drama the names of Lascelles Abercrombie and Gordon Bottomley must be mentioned. Abercrombie tried to adapt earlier verse forms as to make them once more a vital means of dramatic expression. His works include 'Deborch', 'The Adder', 'The End of the World', 'The Staircase', 'The Deserter' and 'Phoenix'. Fundamentally he endeavoured to bring his poetry into close contact with reality. He was not another singer from fairy land as was Yeats; he deliberately departed from the Elizabethan tradition. Consciously he sought to find a form of blank verse expression which might adequately convey to modern spectators the immediate emotions of our times in terms of poetry. The powerful resonance of his verse, with the peculiar welding of highly imaginative language and of common expressions, present a notable contribution to dramatic form.



While Abercrombie has striven to adapt verse to modern colloquial speech, Bottomley entirely departs from realistic conventions. Bottomley makes a return to the classical drama of Greece and to the stage of Japan than to the Elizabethan theatre for his inspiration, although it is to be observed that in earlier plays like 'King Lear's Wife' he has turned partly at least to Shakespeare. In his recent plays among which 'Culbin Sands' is the most important, he tried to indicate to the modern audiences the possibilities of a non-realistic approach and to train both speakers and auditors to appreciate the value of melodic utterance.

The contribution of the Irish movement, also known as Celtic revival, to the cause of the poetic drama is of high importance. Yeats deprecated the conversion of the theatre into the lecture platform and the pulpit by realistic playwrights. He rejected the superficialities of the modern period and sought continuously to retire into a world of mystic symbols through which he might be able to have a glimpse of reality, not subject to change or decay. In 'The Countess Cathleen', 'The Land of Heart's Desire' Yeats devoted his genius to the creation of symbolic dramas with lyrical spontaneity. In his plays Yeats glorified the national myths and legends and depicted primitive human emotions. Essentially a poet, he gave beautiful ideas and first rate lyrical poetry but failed in characterization and plot-construction. His contribution to drama lies essentially in the lyricism of poetry and symbolism.

The Irish movement also inspired a new type of new comedy drawing its inspiration from Irish folk lore and Irish peasantry. The best exponent of this comedy was the talented J. M. Synge. Synge drew his inspiration largely from the simple fisherman of the Aran isles. He also picked up the native speech and picturesque idiom of these people. Synge's famous comedies are 'In the Shadow of the Glen', 'The Tinker's Wedding' and the best of them all 'The Playboy of the Western World'. Synge also wrote a few tragedies, the best of which is 'Riders to the Sea'. Synge's dramatic output is limited but it is of such a high order that his place in British drama is assured for all times to come. Like Shakespeare, he never moralises; he is a dramatist pure and simple and aims at turning the stage into a thing of beauty. Like Shakespeare, again, Synge had not only a sure dramatic instinct and a keen insight into the motive forces of human nature, but also the gift of

transmuting pathos and ugliness into poetry and beauty, and the exuberance inseparable from all great genuises.

In the forties W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood made notable contribution to the revival of poetic drama. Their joint plays are 'The Dog Beneath the Skin' 'The Ascent of F 6' and 'On The Frontier'. The first play 'The Dog Beneath the Skin' has a mythical theme and reads like an old story in modern context. In 'Ascent F 6' there is a mythical atmosphere, and it is here that one notes the conscious creation of a myth out of contemporary elements. These dramatists have raised social issues to a mythological plane.

However, it was left for T. S. Eliot to realise the full possibilities of poetic drama. His important plays are 'Murder in the Cathedral', 'The Family Reunion', 'Cocktail Party' and 'The Confidential Clerk'. The austerity of Eliot's philosophy, his concentrated pessimism, his frank conveyance of religious and moral lesson, appealed to emotions that will be felt even by the most sophisticated audience. The success of 'Murder in the Cathedral' has done much to cancel the prejudice against verse-plays. The high spirituality of this work, the example of its beautiful choruses and the blending of mysticism with realistic humour, have struck the public not only in England but abroad where it has been widely performed. Its chosen medium, a language familiar or elevated at will, and its varying measure, equally fit for dialogues or for flights of lyrical sublimity, have set a lesson of dramatic intensity and poetical inspiration that will be long active in European drama.

A rising dramatist, master of vivid and telling verse-drama and one of the brightest stars in the universe of contemporary drama is Christopher Fry whose work illustrates the new vitality of the poetic medium. In Fry's 'Lady's not for Burning' (1949), a lively and almost irresistible display of extravagance burst upon the public who responded with undisguised enthusiasm. A fictitious fifteenth century served as a background for a truculent verve, humorous sallies and unvarnished pessimism. The verse is loose, pedestrian, but sudden flights of poetry soar in the midst of sheer prose. 'Venus Observed' (1950) has more weight, with a modern plot of original and some what unreal quality. Brilliant verbal feats, and metaphysical conceits, interrupt passages of quite popular flavour. Mystical hints and social allusions give the play a philosophy, suggestive but not very coherent. The most striking feature

is the return to the unlimited liberty of poetical expression in drama.

What influence the public taste will have on the course of drama, future will tell. Doubts are expressed by a number of sceptics whether poetic drama has any future in an age governed and dominated by industrialism, prosaic dullness and materialistic attitude towards life. These critics like Clifford Box feel that, "in such a deflated age as ours the rebirth of poetic drama is likely to be postponed for an incalculable length of time." But there are hopeful critics like T. S. Eliot who have a strong conviction that "we are not going to be deterred by a fatalist-philosophy of history from wanting a poetic drama and from believing that there is some way of getting it. Besides, the craving for poetic drama is permanent in human nature." Though nothing can be said with certitude about future, future drama may be, as Galsworthy predicted, lyrical and its province to describe the elemental soul of man and the forces of nature with beauty and the spirit of discovery. The first glorious period in the history of British drama was the age of Queen Elizabeth I when romance, emotion and imagination reigned supreme. It is as if by some cunning of the Time Spirit that the revival of poetic drama has coincided with the age of Elizabeth II. The people grown weary of sordid materialism and stark realism are impatient to escape into a world of romance and poetry. Upto this time realism and intellectualism have predominated in drama, but the coming future is just likely to be a swing-back of the pendulum that oscillates eternally between romance and realism.

### A Brief Synopsis ;

1. The real difference between verse drama and prose drama is not that the one is written in verse and the other in prose. It is the difference of conception of, or approach to, life. Since drama aims at giving the picture of emotional reality and thereby touching our emotions, poetry is the befitting medium of drama.

2. Like other countries, in England when drama came into being verse was at once recognised as its proper medium. But with the beginning of the twentieth century when serious drama came to be used for the purpose of expressing ideas about contemporary problems, poetic drama was almost dead.

3. There was a reaction against prose play.

4. In the opening years of the century the blank verse plays of Stephen Phillips enjoyed a certain vogue.

5. John Drinkwater gave to poetic Drama a place of dignity and made it a work of art as well as propaganda. Masfield also made important contribution to poetic drama. His 'Nan' has a tragic grandeur and though written in prose is essentially poetic.

6. Stephen Phillips's 'Hassan' is among the best poetic plays written in the twentieth century.

7. Abercrombie and Gordon Bottomley also tried to resuscitate poetic drama.

8. W. B. Yeats devoted his genius to the creation of symbolic dramas with lyrical spontaneity. J. M. Synge is another important name associated with the Celtic Revival.

9. W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood have raised social issues to mythological plane.

10. T. S. Eliot realised the full possibilities of poetic drama.

11. Christopher Fry is a rising dramatist whose works illustrate the new vitality of the poetic medium.

12. The future of poetic drama is bright. The coming future is just likely to be a swing back of the pendulum that oscillates eternally between romance and realism.

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# Literary Essays

## SEC. 2

### Modern Fiction



## **I. Trends in Modern Novel**

Modern English fiction is a veritable chameleon, having countless facets and aspects. Referring to the multitudinous changes in subject-matter; form, technique and style which swept over fiction of this age, J. B. Priestley observes : "If we are asked, 'what has been happening to the English novel during this period ?' we are tempted to reply, 'Everything !' and to let it go at that."

**General Characteristics :— The Influence of psychology :—** The advancement of psychology has gone a long way in revolutionizing the form and spirit of the modern fiction. The Victorian novel presents characters, memorable, vivid, real and simple : not so the moderns. Owing to the influence of the new psychology, especially psycho-analysis with its emphasis on the unconscious and the subconscious, novelists lose themselves in the complexities and subtleties of character, of the inner life, of the strife between the conflicting elements in the same person rather than the overt strife between different persons. This is particularly true of the novelists of "the stream of consciousness" school who came into prominence after the First World War. They concentrated on giving "the complete contents of a mind at a given moment." The whole higgledy-piggledy, of what a mind is, is presented raw without selection or emphasis. Referring to this preponderance of the psychological element in modern fiction, F. L. Lucas said, 'Its figures have so much psychology that they have no room for character. It has worked up the weakness of Hamlet and forgotten its fineness.'

Plot, like character, has decayed. The new psychology is again responsible for this change. Life, the modern psychologist tells us, is to be found neither in a biography, nor in the contents of a mind, nor in its development, nor even in a psychological mood, but in a psychological moment. "An individual is not a personality at all; he is merely a succession of fleeting persons, each of whom endures for a psychological moment." When the very continuity of self is denied, life ceases to be a continuous flow and becomes a series of separate, successive, instantaneous moments. Hence the novelist concentrates on the fleeting psychological state or moment of experience. The modern novelists jiggle with time and place.

The traditional novelists had an eye on the clock and the calendar and narrated the passing of hours and years. The experimenters abolished time and place so that only "consciousness" remained.

**Predominance of Sex**—Another outstanding feature of modern fiction is the completely changed outlook on sex, marriage, and morals. There is a general break-down of Puritan inhibitions on sex largely the result of Freudian psychology and the exposition of sex psychology by Havelock Ellis and other radical thinkers. The Victorian prudery and conception of holy wedlock have been unceremoniously brushed aside. Love is often divorced from marriage and sex and its gratification outside the pale of wedlock are common themes for the modern novelist. Adultery is no longer dreaded as a mortal sin and sex indulgence has nothing unclean or immoral about it. This tendency, originating with the new psychology, was accentuated by the development of new biological theories, invention of contraceptives, and especially by the license generated during the horrors and agony and boredom of the Great War.

This tendency is more in evidence than the aforementioned indifference to character and plot. Even the traditional novelists like Bennett and Galsworthy delight in depicting women who openly lose their virtue. Maugham harps on the sex theme in almost all his novels. The greatest advocate of free love and a perfect reorientation towards sex is D. H. Lawrence. Aldous Huxley also depicts sexual indulgence, although he makes it appear thoroughly pointless and boring. Some novelists carry this feature to an extreme limit and incur the charge of obscenity. Lawrence's 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' and Joyce's 'Ulysses' have often been mistaken for pornographic literature.

**Consciousness of form**—The modern novelists have shown great consciousness of form. The modern novels are very well constructed. They are not loose and rambling like the novels which the Victorian giants flung out in their exuberance of energy. Dickens neglected form and style because his desire for utterance was so strong. Later novelists, for example Meredith and Henry James, had less to say and could afford time to say it carefully; and when creative energy became still less abundant after 1914, disproportionate attention began to be given to theories of fiction. The disintegration in society accounts also for this crowning achievement of the modern novel—its style. When good order is failing, things

become difficult to grasp, and the art of description has to be developed to keep pace with the changing situation. The prose of good fiction has become more elaborate and exacting; art has begun to be judged by severely technical standards.

**The Novel of Ideas: Wells, Bennet and Galsworthy**—The characteristic Edwardian novel was concerned with the discussion of ideas: scientific, social, political, industrial, and so forth, and was designed for the large middle-class public which had grown up during the nineteenth century, and was now well established. The smug complacency of the Victorian age was being disturbed here and there by anxious questionings as to the validity of the institutions and conventions which had upheld the old order. The emancipation of women was proceeding apace; the hold of the Church on the allegiance of the people was waning; the motor car and the aeroplane brought increased social mobility, and this was intensified by a war fought by citizen armies. There was a vast accession of state-educated readers to the ranks of the fiction lovers, and the spread of public libraries and the publication of cheap editions gave them easier access to books. These readers, enjoying the thrill of living in an expanding age, needed the support of general notions for their intellectual life, but were not sufficiently trained to seek their sustenance in specialised books. It was the novel of ideas which provided them with the tonic they needed, in the right doses and in the right strength.

**H. G. Wells**—H. G. Wells was outstanding in this work of popular enlightenment. He was a missionary among the novelists, teaching and healing, and propagating a gospel of life and conduct for the New Age. He had no respect for accepted conventions and he subjected them to a withering scrutiny. Values that were not susceptible to scientific proof he rated as fictitious.

Wells' novels fall broadly into three divisions—scientific romances, domestic novel with its emphasis on character and humour, and sociological novels. As an author of scientific romances he has no equal; they are masterpieces of imaginative power. Projecting himself to a distant standpoint, to the moon, the future, the air, or another planet, he views our life from the outside. This comic viewpoint enabled Wells to criticize present conditions and at the same time picture all kinds of exciting and terrifying possibilities. He began with 'The Time Machine' and followed this



up with other romances founded on an imaginative treatment of science, such as 'The War of the Worlds', 'The First Men in the Moon' and 'The Food of the Gods', mostly written before 1908.

Wells turned from the writing of fantastic romances to domestic fiction. He knew life in the London suburbs at first hand and he described it with enthusiasm in 'Kipps' (1905); a comedy of class instincts. 'Tono Bungay' (1909) is one of Wells' most remarkable pictures of English society in dissolution in the later nineteenth century, and of the advent of the newly rich. Although 'Tono Bungay' is in some ways bitterly satirical, the racy pungent humour and the amusing characterization of George Pondevero's aunt and uncle make the book one of the most entertaining Wells ever wrote. 'Ann Veronica' is the first English novel to treat the sex relationship openly and frankly. In 'Love and Mr. Lewisham' (1900) and 'The History of Mr. Polly' (1910) the author gives us realistic studies of the lower middle-class he knew so well and could describe with such tenderness and humour.

The sociological novels began after 'Tono Bungay'. Each successive volume marked a phase in his long enquiry as to the aims and ideals of civilized man engaged in the Human adventure. 'The Work' 'Wealth and Happiness of Mankind' (1932) and 'The Shape of Things to Come' (1933) again showed his interest in perspectives.

Wells contributed nothing fresh to fiction in the matter of form. What he did was to follow where Meredith had led in the use of the novel as "the vehicle of philosophy". Wells merely decreased the proportion of story to ideas. In characterization too Wells was no innovator in method. His characterization has little freshness, it is not deliberately psychological. If there is an innovation, it is in his love of simple souls like Kipps and Polly and Mr. Preemby as his central figures. Wells has tried to do many things at the same time and it does not do well for one man to take the burden of Atlas on his shoulders. He did not make full use of his own great gifts as he was always busy trying to extricate all the men of the world from the muddle in which they were. His achievement is great but it could have been greater had he been whole-heartedly devoted to his own chosen work, that of writing fiction.

**Arnold Bennet** — Arnold Bennet did not possess the creative energy or the genius of Wells but he was the better artist. He is

one of those novelists who view this world as dispassionate spectators. Like Wells he was not fired by a passion to change the world but accepted it as it was. He came under the influence of the "naturalistic" school of writers in France whom he admired. These novelists made much of "technique". Theirs was a detached point of view, a suppression of the narrator, a deliberate simplicity.

Bennett was an abundant and generous creature who held out both hands to life. There was a good deal of philistine in him. Life never lost its glamour for him. He painted his native district, the Five Towns, in all his novels. His Five Towns are an important addition to the atlas of topographical fiction. The place is one of the grimmest and ugliest of all industrial districts. His lighter novels, such as 'The Card' and 'The Regent', show him exploiting the provincial humours of his district.

He casts aside the trappings of romance and then evolves against all odds romance itself. This is best illustrated in 'The Old Wives' Tale', a really massive work of art. The long chronicle follows the lives of two sisters, Constance and Sophia Baines—one staid and sensible, and the other passionate and imaginative, daughters of a linedraper of Burley—from their girlhood, through disillusionment and old age, to death. The drab life of the draper's shop, the trivial incidents of everyday existence, the unimportant people, are made interesting by Bennett's grasp of characterization and his skill in selecting detail. Its firm lines, its huge social background, its spirit of grave pity make it one of the great achievements of modern fiction. In his later novels Bennett turned away from his familiar ground and lost his sureness of touch. In 'Riceyman Steps', however, where the scene is a London slum area, he was again successful in his portrayal of sordidness,

Bennett succeeds in making the society, the streets, the houses of his Five Towns so realistic by means of heaping minute details to produce a cumulative effect. His novels are crammed with excellent observation and a "sort of poetry of streets, hotels, emporiums." As Priestley sums up, "Arnold Bennett was at once the historian, the philosopher, and the troubadour of our ordinary human life."

**John Galsworthy** - John Galsworthy, whose best work is to be found in that series of novels called, 'The Forsyte Saga' has sometimes been compared to Bennett with a country gentleman back-

ground. He has not the serene detachment of Bennett. He takes sides. He is hurt and angry and he sympathizes and attacks. He has no patience with the calculating, unimaginative Forsytes and loves the rebels, the Bohemians. It is impossible for any reader to feel for Soames Forsyte, because his creator so palpably abhors this "man of property". The best part of his character is his affection for his daughter and in the later series he is a fully articulated being. When Galsworthy is merely content to narrate, his picture of the Forsyte family becomes one of the notable things of modern fiction.

Primarily 'The Forsyte Saga' is a satire; in the opinion of D. H. Lawrence... "the ultimate satire on modern humanity and done from the inside, with really consummate skill and sincere creative passion, something quite new." It gained in mordancy having been written by a man who by birth and education, belonged to the world he was condemning. Harrow and Oxford had given Galsworthy a fine sense of traditional values, a respect for life and a refinement of taste. But it did nothing to harden the sensitiveness that made him conscious of suffering and forced him instinctively to take sides with the under-dog.

Galsworthy's handling of the novel is the flower of the central traditional manner. That is to say, he aimed at a well-proportioned combination of story and characterization; he gave his main characters a background, both of minor characters and of physical setting and atmosphere, and he kept his own part as unobtrusive as possible. In Soames he has certainly added one more to the rich gallery of individual portraits in the English novel. He stands out as a unique figure among all the Forsytes, typical but distinct beyond possibility of mistake. But there are many others of his people who carry their personality in all their words and acts: it is only when he steps below the Property line that Galsworthy fails to give life. His women, too, especially Soames's first wife, Irene, and his daughter Fleur, are realised in the clear personal separation of their nervous vitality.

**Joseph Conrad**—About 1920 Conrad stood in general opinion, alongside Bennett Wells and Galsworthy, as one of chief novelists, but his work differed greatly from theirs. Conrad, telling on the whole more exciting and colourful stories than did the other three nevertheless, paid much more attention than they to the psychologi-

cal presentation of character and motives and also achieved at the same time a more comprehensive and universal criticism of life. At mid-century Conrad may well appear the most modern of these four by virtue of his painstaking artistry and subtlety of his psychological approach.

How different his work was from that of his great contemporaries Virginia Woolf acknowledged in her essay on Modern Fiction, in which she not only exempted him from her attack on materialism as exemplified in the novels of Bennett, Wells and Galsworthy, but also placed him with Hardy as one fit to receive "our unconditional gratitude". Indeed, far from writing in any materialistic spirit, conflict between man and nature, and of the mysteries of the human soul, and, in his view of man, the word "soul" was an inevitable word to use.

Conrad's first two works are based on his experiences of Malaya—'Almayer's Folly' and 'An Outcast of the Island'. They give a foretaste of his later works in their use of a tropical background. Then came one of his remarkable achievements, 'The Nigger of the Narcissus', a moving story of life on boardship which is remarkable for its powerful atmosphere. One of his other novels, 'The Rescue', is long-drawn out but has moments of high excitement.

It is impossible to think of Conrad as novelist apart from his devotion to the sea, for in that intimate love lay the secret of his view of life. The sea was at once the concrete and symbolical test of character. In the school of the sea the great lessons learnt were simple basic virtues the most important of which was the idea of fidelity. The philosophic narrator, Marlow, through whom Conrad often expresses himself, puts this faith in the simple things vigorously in 'Lord Jim' :—

"Hang ideas ! They are tramps,...each carrying away some crumb of that belief in a few simple notions you must cling to life if you want to live decently and would like to die easy."

Life indeed in Conrad's books is a hostile force: how malignantly hostile Nature could be is most powerfully shown in 'The Heart of Darkness', in which the evil power of the African jungle converts an idealist into a living pagan deity fit for the savage tribes who worship him. In the battle against nature many fail. Conrad's interest, as often with Browning, lies frequently in the

failures, in analysing the weakness of a man's character, and, as does Shakespeare, he often pits a man against just those circumstances that are fatal to his weakness. His psychology is the servant of his moral vision.

Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy and Conrad—these were the four outranking novelists who maintained the prestige of the traditional type of novel in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Besides these four traditionalists, mention must be made of Henry James who was an innovator in some respects and had a powerful influence on the novel of this century.

**Henry James**—Among the pioneers of psychological novel Henry James deserves a special mention. In the beginning of the twentieth century it was he who proceeded to make his main concern the inside rather than the outside of his characters, and to replace the primary interest of story by the fascination of the carefully traced reasoning and feeling which motivated a few figures. This was a narrowing of the broader human interest of the novel to a more specialised study of motives and character; and the general tendency towards the twentieth century was indeed in the direction of making the interest of the intellect predominate of over the love of a story.

The high water-mark of the career of Henry James was reached in three novels: 'The Wings of the Dove', 'The Ambassador' and 'The Golden Bowl'. In these novels he achieved a subtlety of character study, a delicacy of perception and an elaboration of artistic presentation which ranked him high among modern novelists. He was concerned little with external events and almost entirely with the detailed and elaborate study of the subtlest shades of human reaction to the situations which he conceived. It was a great innovation in the field of fiction, but perhaps the time was not ripe to receive the new technique, and that is why he could not gain popularity, in spite of his being a superb artist.

**Minor Traditional Novelists**—Round about 1910-12 when Wells, Bennet, Galsworthy and Conrad were maintaining the prestige of the traditional type of English novel, a group of younger writers began to produce able work. Compton Mackenzie in 'Sinister Street' (1913, 1914) began that development of the novel to the portrayal of boyhood and youth which was to be taken up later by a good many minor novelists. He made it a substantial



story with a full background, a novel in the traditional manner, chiefly "modern" in its concentrating on the early years of its principal figure. After the war Compton-Mackenzie continued to be read but the "intelligentsia" gave little attention to him. J. D. Beresford and Frank Swinnerton, both possessing robust masculine intellect, became established novelists after 1918. Of this group, Hugh Walpole achieved the most solid success. He continued to develop the traditional novel in his generous romantic way, speaking much of the soul and enjoying the bustle, comedy and colour of the Polchester scene: his deceptive easy style (for it was capable of a good deal of subtlety in psychology and atmosphere) and his appeal to the emotions and moral approval of his readers earned him the disapproval of higher critics, but his novels were very widely read by the average serious novel-reading public. Francis Brett Young, a beginner about 1914, who served as a medical officer during the war also, kept treading the traditional path of novel-writing. His experiences provided a very good setting for his novel of character and adventure.

**The Stream of Consciousness School of Novelists**—It was around 1920 that the attack on the traditional novel began. For some years new influences had been making themselves felt. In the twenties the sensitive psychological patterning of Proust was to be a potent French influence. But the influence of the Russian novel was in the long run to have a considerably deeper effect than that of the French. By the work of the Russian masters, particularly of Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Tchekov, it was possible to realise how much more deeply one could penetrate into the human soul than English novelists had so far attempted. The influence of the Russian novel came to a head in time to join forces with the psychology of the sub-conscious mind which was also by 1920 becoming current. Freud and Jung shook the foundations of human thought by their revolutionary discoveries in the field of psycho-analysis. It was revealed that the human consciousness has very deep layers and, buried under the conscious region, are the sub-conscious and unconscious regions of the human psyche. Infinitesimal buried thoughts keep coming to the surface from the vast oceans of the sub-conscious. According to Freud human thinking suffers greatly from sexual obsessions and every action of man—even his dreams, reverie, half-expressed and unexpressed thoughts—could be traced back to his sex instincts. People now began to look at things from a new perspective. Experiments were made in

the light of psycho-analysis. Stream of consciousness was one such experiment.

It was William James who, first of all, named the 'Stream of consciousness' in his admirable book 'Principles of Psychology' published in 1890. The metaphor was invoked by him to describe the flux of the mind, its continuity, and yet its continuous change. The stream of consciousness novelists follow the expressionist technique by which characters are projected, not by reporting their actions and sayings, as observed from without by an omniscient recorder, but by making the characters themselves reveal their inmost thoughts, moods and feelings, however inconsequent, fragmentary, and fleeting these may be. The expressionists see a man's life not as a sequence of separate acts and emotions, each capable of analysis in isolation, but rather as a 'stream of consciousness' eddying and flowing in a perpetual flux, which is only partly manifested in what he says or does.

The exponents of this technique believed that our consciousness which is part of our soul does not proceed logically or coherently. Generally it follows a freakish association of ideas whose progress cannot be charted. So they deviated from the convention of chronological continuity. They take no account of time. They believe that a part of an evening or morning can represent eternity or less than a single plus-beat. One person's life story may have less importance than twenty-four hours in the life of another.

**Dorothy Richardson**—Dorothy Richardson is the first novelist to use the stream of consciousness method deliberately in order to portray character. Miriam Henderson is the heroine of 'Pointed Roofs', and her story is continued in a series of sequels, collectively called 'The Pilgrimage'. The moments of Miriam's consciousness pass one by one, or overlapping; moments tense with vibration, moments drawn out fine, almost to a snapping-point. There is no drama, no situation, no set scene. Nothing happens. It is Miriam's stream of consciousness going on and on. Dorothy Richardson gives us a wonderful insight into the mind of a woman, who, though sometimes annoying is undoubtedly a strange and interesting person. 'The Pilgrimage' books mark an epoch in the technical development of the novelist's art.

**James Joyce**—James Joyce's 'Ulysses' (1922) was a remarkable experiment in the novel. Tracing a not very attractive, though very

human, "hero" through some twenty-four hours of a Dublin day, Joyce portrayed the outer world through the inner workings of his hero's consciousness. In language and structure it is one of the outstanding achievements of modern literature. It is divided into eighteen episodes, and each carries three layers of allegorical meaning, apart from the superficial story, and is related organically to the whole. Joyce had to evolve a new kind of language in which normal syntax was abandoned and the sentence was no longer the basic unit of expression. He discarded the traditional method of composition and employed a language in which words were torn from their customary associations, mutilated, coined a fresh and sent chasing helter and skelter after the elusive shreds of meaning.

Joyce set out to give a very acute expression to the breakdown of modern civilization. To do this he went back to the Dublin of his youth, and imagined with unflagging detail the life, for some twenty-four hours, of an advertising agent of thirty-eight, an Irish Jew, Leopold Bloom. From the early morning in June 1904 when Bloom gets up and makes his wife's breakfast until the early hours of the next day Joyce exposes more than Bloom himself could know about himself and his environment. We have a sense of the teeming life of a city seen under a microscope. As Joyce shows, it is a dreary spectacle, in which hardly anything exists to stir the reader to admiration, love, pity, sympathy or even hatred. It joins T. S. Eliot's indictment on the Waste Land and shares Huxley's disgust at the human animal. It is the twilight of an age, and its chill has infected its author.

The basic technique for the exposure of Leopold Bloom and his wife is that of internal monologue. The reader is inside Bloom's mind, in the flow of his inconsecutive and partially formulated thoughts and transient feelings. Bloom's psychological process is one of expansion and contraction; an encounter, a memory, an association of ideas start his mind into extra-activity, which having reached a climax, ebbs away.

Virginia Woolf—At the same time, in the early twenties, Virginia Woolf dealt the traditional novel another effective blow. Looking at the novels of Bennett, Wells and Galsworthy she found that the reality of life escaped them. All three novelists were adjudged "materialists" because of their preoccupation with the outside of life. For her the true and enduring resided in the very essence of life, the ever-changing, ever fluctuating consciousness. "Life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding

us from the beginning of consciousness to the end." "Is it not", she asked, "the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?" Because she found in 'Ulysses' an attempt "to reveal the flickerings of that inner most flame which flashes its messages through the brain", she found Joyce, in contrast to her materialists, spiritual.

The work of Woolf, though she was stimulated by the experimental work of Joyce's 'Ulysses', is very different in essentials from Joyce's. The demands that she makes are upon our spiritual understanding and aesthetic sensibility rather than upon the intellect. Her concern is for beauty, and she is worlds apart from the sordid life of Joyce's Dublin. If at times she expresses a feeling of the meaninglessness of life, it is only in a temporary trough in the sea of life : even if she felt herself in the Waste Land, she would raise her eyes and her heart to the stars, and, because in 1941 her spirit failed and she could not, she died.

Her first attempt in a new manner was 'Jacob's Room'. 'Mrs. Dalloway' was nearly successful, and in 1927 'To the Lighthouse' showed her in full control of a technique which displayed the inner stream of consciousness, the spirit of life ebbing and flowing; symbolism too played its part in her treatment; a very sensitive artistry added a delight at times akin to poetic pleasure. A new kind of novel had been born in England. Story in the old sense had largely disappeared, but the traditional English gift was supremely retained by means of the new technique in the two unforgettable realities of Mrs. Ramsay and her husband. Excellent though 'To the Lighthouse' is, her supreme achievement is 'The Waves' (1931). In so far as we are submerged almost completely in the waves of consciousness of the characters (a part of the meaning of the title) it is less satisfactory as a novel, at any rate much more difficult of complete apprehension, but as a vision of life it has the complex harmonies, the suggestive mystery and beauty of great poetry. In fact it is a prose poem of the human consciousness, conceived and executed by a wise, sensitive and skilled artist.

Reading deeply into human consciousness, Virginia Woolf keeps two aspects specially before us. Men and women exist in ultimate loneliness; but are incomprehensible except in their full

setting : as she says of Mrs. Dalloway, "to know her, or anyone, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places.' Secondly, what is visible is but a fragment of the whole, for below the surface are the depths of the subconscious, from which, from time to time, only small emanations proceed, and these are often unpredictable. Thus she presents her men and women with a rare humility, seeming to declare that personality must remain finally inscrutable, beyond complete understanding. We see personality at moments unified, but can never analyse with certainty all the elements that make that unity, or know how many other different unities that same personality can at other times produce. Humble in this way herself she hated those who would, in her phrase, "force the soul" trying to pierce and rifle its sacred privacy.

**Criticism of Contemporary Civilization Between the Wars—**Though many critics worshipped Joyce and Virginia Woolf, writers were reluctant to indulge in further revolutionary experiment. On the whole the greatest change in the novel in the twenties was not in technique, but in the impact of new ideas upon moral standards in the flux of the post-war mind. As regards the novel, the period between the Wars indeed presented a remarkably rich and varied scene, impossible to summarise with real justice. With Joyce and Virginia Woolf in the vanguard, the novelists who, next to them, attracted most attention were probably D. H. Lawrence, E. M. Forester and Aldous Huxley.

**E. M. Forester and D. H. Lawrence—**Basically the "Modernness" of Forester and Lawrence consists in the discomfort of soul which made them both critics of contemporary civilization. From their earliest novels their attack upon the materialism of their day is clear, if sometimes implicit rather than explicit. Forester from the start was explicit enough in his denunciation of the life according to convention and in his preaching of the spontaneous life, and by 'Howards End' (1910) undisguised in his attack on the business mind and the worship of bigness in industrialised England. Discomfort of soul is obvious in his characters, and not difficult to feel in their creator's urgent attempt to "save their souls" in the course of his stories. As against the cheerful enthusiasm of Wells advocating an open conspiracy to beget the World State, Forester rather impresses one as preaching a secret conspiracy for culture



and the education of the heart, with a fear, in his last novel, that the battle may be lost. In Forester's attack on his Pembrokes and Wilcoxes there is a tension of the spirit quite absent from Galsworthy's exposition of the weaknesses of the Forsytes. Lawrence's reaction against the materialism of the machine age, against the intellectual and scientific bias of the time, against the unnaturalness of the personal and social life in modern conditions, soon cried aloud in novel after novel.

Not only did Forester and Lawrence share this general reaction against contemporary civilization, but they also had a common positive theme; for the novels of both are really exercises on the motif of "right personal relationships", a favourite phrase of Forester's. Their solutions were radically different: Forester relied on intelligence, culture and an awakening of the heart, while Lawrence, though he too was preaching to the heart, relied primarily on the passions of the blood and was preoccupied with sexuality, a theme almost alien to Forester.

D. H. Lawrence, who led the revolt against reason, was one of the most disputed geniuses of his time. He traced the springs of conduct to Freudian depths, and his heroes and heroines were prompted by dark urges springing up from their subconscious selves. His novels were not concerned with telling stories, but with the study of inner conflicts and their resolution. He was acutely conscious of the unhappiness which comes from the divided mind, and he sought to restore wholeness. Lawrence was one of the most prominent of the novelists who were influenced by the psycho-analysis.

His first novel 'The White Peacock', was published in 1911, the year following his mother's death. The novel exhibits his awareness of the social influences that operate to thwart the natural play of instinct and affinity. 'Sons and Lovers', which followed in 1913, is largely autobiographical. In this novel from the vantage point of twenty eight Lawrence surveyed his childhood, the loves of his early manhood and his relationship with his mother. In 'Rainbow' (1915) Lawrence dealt with conflicts and soul-storms of sex on an almost epic scale. 'Women in Love' is a sequel to 'The Rainbow'. The rainbow, which in the earlier novel was the symbol of reviving hope, is paralleled in 'Women in Love' by the statue of an African woman, a study in pure sensation. Lawrence suggests

that harmony might be restored to life by accepting the value of purely physical experience. Lawrence was now ready to begin his mission as a prophet of the new order; to build up the new myth of the blood consciousness that should save humanity from the sterile waste of spirit in a world bounded by the limiting cerebral reality. Christianity, he rejected, because it was dualistic, perpetuating the conflict between flesh and spirit, mind and matter. He wanted to do away with the centuries' old domination of the cerebral intelligence which ignored the cosmic mystery of life, to liberate the suppressed instincts and to return to the primitive belief that there was an organic relationship between man and the universe. So largely expressed in his novels but very much in his letters too, he evolved a kind of modern pagan religion to free men from the sterility, from the monotonous boredom and mechanical slavery of the machine age. In a letter he writes:—"My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh as being wiser than the intellect... All I want is to answer to my blood, direct, without fribbling intervention of mind, or moral, or what-not." Fully convinced that he had found the solution for society's ills, Lawrence wrote 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' (1928), in which the entire social system is made to depend on an integral sex relationship. The theme presented is, in a way, allegorical. Chatterley, returning crippled and impotent from war, symbolizes the degenerate post war world. Mellors, his game keeper, is the "natural" man and has affinities with Morel in 'Sons and Lovers' and with Birkin in 'Women in Love'. Chatterley is the effete, worn-out, over civilized product of purely mental living. Connie, Lady Chatterley, is the feminine consciousness that must decide between the old social order, devitalized and sterile, and the new, bright with promised life. In the end Connie and Mellors unite in triumph over the forces of convention that threaten them, and the novel ends with the awaited birth of their child.

Lawrence was no experimenter in technique as Joyce was, but content to use the traditional form and plot, although his conception of the dynamics of personality was peculiarly his own. He was the only novelist of his time to use the novel for the purpose of recreating the great myths by which humanity lives, and he did it with a burning intensity and sincerity. His prose style matched his strange vision. Its dark radiance sprang from a poetic fervour that found expression in words and phrases charged with suggestive beauty. Yet the fact that he was attempting to convey a meaning

that is only truly explicit in symbols led to an intolerable amount of repetition and diffusiveness. He often seems to be suffocating in his effort to express the visions of his brain. But when all is said, there is greatness in him ; he is something of an authentic visionary and the future may be in a better position to interpret his dreams.

E. M. Forester, a liberal and a humanist, loved civilization, which he regarded as liberalism's finest achievement. Order, culture, toleration admirable as they were in themselves, were so often balanced by hardness, complacency and insensitivity and by the absence of the vital principle that gave richness and joy to life. Those who were the pillars of society, respected guardians of civilization, often lacked heart and were devoid of tenderness. This problem of the confused complexity of human characters and relationships is the chief theme of Forester's novels. His novels depict the conflict between two ways of life—the way of the heart, which loves and understands but is often confused and misguided, and the official way that preserves order but stifles genuineness under a pall of good form and convention. Human beings tend to fall (in Forester's words) into two main groups, the "crustaceans" and the "vitalists". The former are the adherents of lifeless convention, hidebound conservatives whose responses, once conditioned in youth, are never modified by experience or understanding. They are the enemies of the idea, they destroy love because their hearts are undeveloped and they cause the delicate fibres of human relationships to wither. Opposed to them are "vitalists", who feel deeply and are not afraid of their feelings, who let the heart guide them in their relations with others, who take the broad view and refuse to let respect for convention stifle their generous impulses

His first novel 'Where Angels Fear to Tread' (1905) deals with the clash between the "Crustaceans" and the "Vitalists". In 'The Longest Journey' (1907) the same patterned contrast between convention and nature, the "Crustaceans" and the "Vitalists" is worked out more elaborately. In 'Howard's End' (1910) his theme was that, while the practical business mind, typified in the Wilcoxes, was limited, it had qualities essential to successful living, and that the desired end was its humanising by the qualities which the Schlegels possessed, a sensitive understanding of moral and aesthetic values. The pattern of the novel is indeed once more based on the attempted saving of a soul, for that is primarily Margaret

Schlegel's aim, to redeem Mr. Wilcox from materialism and to achieve in their union the truly balanced life.

If Forester had stopped there, he had done enough already to encourage the keen questioning of current materialism. 'A Passage to India' (1924), however, displaying the mature power of its author, added weight to his first novels. The gist of this novel, in fact, is that the establishing of true personal relationships is not as hopeful of achievement as had been suggested. Forester draws in Fielding a character whose sympathies with Indians are true and sensitive, but Fielding in the end finds that intelligence, good-will, and culture, are not enough to connect East and West, not enough indeed, we feel, in Forester's view, to solve life's problems anywhere. In the centre of the book Mrs. Moore's faith, in life, is drained away by the desolating echo in the Marabar caves.

But 'A Passage to India' is too great a work of art to render up any simple view of life. On the surface it presents the magnitude, mystery and complexity of India; symbolically it presents the complex mystery of all life and is a study of the problem of evil in the universe. Neither its end nor its total effect depresses. Indeed the last section hints strongly at an ultimate goodness behind the mystery of the universe. The end is a brusque parting of East and West. But one feels that, if only Western civilization could learn the uninhibited naturalness of the East, its ability to be happy, its blending of the serious and the humorous, the result might not fulfil the motto "Only Connect", yet it would certainly help the West. Indeed in his own understanding of the East Forester in 'A Passage to India' created the one character who exists in the fulness of life in his novels, Dr. Aziz, fluid, contradictory and unpredictable.

**Somerset Maugham**—Like other Georgian novelists Somerset Maugham reflects the mood of bitter cynicism and frustration which overtook the post war generation in England and elsewhere.

Maugham revealed himself as the master of documentary realism in 'Liza of Lambeth' (1904), and 'Of Human Bondage' (1915). Sternly suppressing sentimentality, Maugham presented an unvarnished picture of life, laying special emphasis on the forces that make for the frustration of the individual, whether they spring from human passions or are occasioned by the workings of society. 'Of Human Bondage' is a sad grim book in which the working of

fate has a menacing inevitability; its sincerity cannot be questioned but the total effect is undeniably depressing. The book reveals his quest for stable values. 'The Moon and Sixpence' (1919) told the story of Gauguin and his flight from civilization to a tropical island. 'Cakes and Ale' (1930) is his masterpiece and contains Rosie, the unforgettable character created by Maugham. The novel presents a caustic portrait of two authors, one a genial old bohemian who has become famous and the other a novelist who has been commissioned by the celebrity's second wife to write an official biography. She is anxious to provide a reverential idea of him for his admirers. The novel is chiefly distinguished for its clever study of the first wife, a good-natured harlot who runs away.

**Aldous Huxley**—Social historians of the future will undoubtedly turn to the writing of Huxley as a guide to an understanding of the generation that came to maturity between the First and Second World Wars. He was the spokesman of the "modernists". Lacking the imaginative power of Lawrence and the poetic sensitivity of Virginia Woolf, Huxley had a more assured grasp of the problems of the time and approached them with more knowledge and a better intellectual equipment than either.

Huxley's novels are primarily talk, at first amusing with its wit and satire, later purposefully seeking a beneficent truth, and then issuing the gloomiest warnings in profound despair. His first novel, 'Crome Yellow' (1921), was little more than a conversation piece. In 'Antic Hay' (1923) Huxley expanded his treatment, but did not change his method. 'Those Barren Leaves', he let his people talk at even greater length. The result was sprawling novel, diffuse and discontinuous. By the end it became a novel with a purpose, that of analysing the disease of modern civilization and of searching for a cure. In 'Point Counter Point' (1928) in fact Huxley followed on from the end of 'Those Barren Leaves'. What kind of man was best fitted to cope with the dilemma of civilization? The answer which the novelist seemed to suggest was a combination of the best points of the characters, Philip Quarles and Mark Rampion. Read between the lines, Huxley seemed to declare: "Humanise and vitalise the intelligence." 'Brave New World' (1932) is a satiric fantasy. What life would be in a world of pure science has been caricatured in it. "Fully realising the value of science and of the scientific spirit, he was fully as much afraid of the kind of world its abuse and idolatory might produce,



but in trying to present his fearful imagination he lacked the persuasiveness of H. G. Wells". (S. D. Neill).

'Eyeless in Gaza' (1936) represents Huxley's most ambitious effort. The story is told in three layers of time : in the foreground is the diary kept by Anthony Beavis in 1934; below, are the events of August 1933, which gradually draw up to the time of the diary and finally overtake them; below those again is the previous life of Anthony and his friends, also told in three layers, one between 1902 and 1904, one between 1912 and 1914, and one between 1926 and 1928. But the novelist does not keep to the chronological order : he shuffles the layers. The novelist, however, controls the shuffling and the result is extraordinarily successful. The method suggests, too, the continuity of life, with the future implicit in the present and the past living in the present. so that, looking backwards, one has a sense of destiny in cause and effect. This shuffling of chronology was Huxley's one striking development. After *Many a Summer*' (1940) is a closely knit novel with an exciting main plot, but its basic theme is philosophic—the contrast between two conceptions of time, that of the mystic, and that of the scientists. *'Time Must Have a Stop'* (1945) showed a startling return in manner to the style of *'Crome Yellow'* and *'Antic Hay'*. Undoubtedly the most original aspect of *'Time Must Have a Stop'* is Huxley's attempt to explore the consciousness after death. Failure to persuade humanity to follow him along the path of non-attachment and unity provoked Huxley to a savage denunciation of man in *'Ape and Essence'* (1949), a bitter novel, in which he predicts the bestial degradation of the human species after a third world war.

Huxley made little or no contribution to the development of novel as an art form; in fact his novels are really essays and conversations strung together on a slender thread of plot. But he did for fiction what Shaw had done for the drama, namely, made intellectual discussion as exciting as emotional experience. He created in fiction an image of the dynamic world of ideas that underlies the changing outward society. His mental evolution in the two decades between the two wars, reflecting as it does the main trend of intellectual opinion, gives him a unique value as a commentator in contemporary fiction.

**J. C. Powys**—John Cowper Powys never had or could have so wide a public as Aldous Huxley, but his work, equally a product of

the times, and, like Huxley's, is indeed hardly conceivable out of relation to the years after 1920. It appealed to a relatively small, but to a devoted audience, for whom Powys was something of a prophet speaking to hearts repelled by the materialism of the age.

'A Glastonbury Romance' appeared in 1933. It centres on a huge religious pageant culminating in the impersonation of Christ, upon the Cross. The story is fantastic enough. Yet the strange, often grotesque improbability of it all, is conveyed with a searching psychological realism. He was indeed the supreme instance in this period of the creative artist absorbing and bringing to life the teachings of the psycho-analysts, excelling even Joyce in his artistic command of his material. He rivals Virginia Woolf in presenting his people in such a way that we live constantly in their internal world of thoughts, memories and feelings and are immersed in the flow of consciousness.

That his novels became controlled by a mystical view of life links him not only with the Huxley of the middle period but with D. H. Lawrence, to whom he is in fact closer in prophetic quality and in a tendency to over-write both his mysticism and the emotional sensitivity of his characters.

Though 'A Glastonbury Romance' was a great achievement, 'Owen Glendower' (1941) was superior, and it is perhaps the greatest example of the historical novel in this century. Owen Glendower is the Welsh prince of Shakespeare's 'Henry IV', and in the hands of Powys the man, the prince, and the age, the early fifteenth century, are shown with all the vital complexity characteristic of the treatment in 'A Glastonbury Romance'. It is on the grand scale: one has the national scene, English and Welsh, the political, religious and economic aspects, soldiers, courtiers and peasants, fighting, loving, worshiping, singing, plotting. His technique is as before, presenting both the inner and outer life, and many of his historical figures have dark twists of soul and a tortured eroticism like his moderns. The novel is indeed a wonderful application to the past of the psychological and historical knowledge of a penetrating modern mind, humorist and mystic, which is drawn to the darker aspects of human nature but reacts with a fascinated sensitiveness to all life. "His great virtue as a novelist lies in his deep and sympathetic knowledge of human nature and his conviction that life, even in pain, is a glorious experience. He did not try to run away from

modern civilization like Lawrence, or hate humanity like Huxley, or help to paralyse the nerves of living like Joyce" (Dr. A. S. Colins).

**Regional Novel**—The regional novel was a healthy development, but it was a narrowing of the novel's scope. Partly from the stimulus given by Hardy's concentration on Wessex, several novelists made a particular region their chosen world. Arnold Bennett, about whom enough has already been said, is the best exponent of the regional novel in the beginning of the twentieth century. Mary Webb took Shropshire and in 'Precious Bone' (1924) her aim was very largely to preserve a passing age with its old local customs and superstitions, while her earlier novel 'The Golden Arrow' had been pervaded by the sense of change as modern ideas began to intrude into here isolated countryside. Sheila Kaye Smith too had for some years concerned herself with Sussex past and present, before 'The End of the House of Alard' in 1924 depicted the break up of an old Sussex landed family under the force of modern conditions. The regional novel had begun early in the century as in the West Country Tales of Eden Philpotts, but it was in the twenties that it really took root. Then it continued in the thirties and forties, Yorkshire being a particularly favoured region, as in Winifred Holtby's 'South Riding', while Leo Walmsley became the novelist of the fisher folk of the North East coast. The Anglo-Welsh novels of Caradoc Evans and others, though hardly to be labelled "regional", may also well be borne in mind here.

**Novel since the second World War**—Since 1939 the English novel appears, as far as it can be judged at such close range, to have lacked the strong sense of purpose and direction which lay behind the work of the most significant of the inter-war novelists. The death in 1941 of both James Joyce and Virginia Woolf deprived the novel of two of its acknowledged leaders and boldest innovators, though the influence of both has continued to make itself felt after their death. Of the other leaders in this field, E. M. Forster has produced no novel since 'A Passage to India', while Huxley has produced little that adds materially to his stature.

The novel still continues to be the chief literary form in English. The more important practitioners have continued to regard the novel as a serious form, attempting in some degree an interpretation of life, and demanding the delicacy and subtlety of touch of other art forms. The uncertainty of the war years is well

reflected in the emphasis on disintegration, despair, and failure in the contemporary novel, while the frequency with which violence and sadistic cruelty are made its themes is not surprising in a world familiar with the horrors of blitzes, concentration camps, and atom bombs. A strain of deliberately cultivated 'toughness', in the Hemingway manner, is to be found in a great deal of modern fiction.

**The Trinity of 'Greens'**—Among recent novelists, the trinity of "Greens"—F. L. Green, Henry Green and Graham Green deserve attention. F. L. Green shot into fame with his 'Odd Man Out' (1945). He has followed his success with other novels, among which his recent work 'The Magician', is a remarkable study of evil. His novels show much of the vigour, and something of the concern with evil and violence, which are among the most noteworthy characteristics of this period.

Henry Green is a gifted novelist and skilled craftsman, with marked stylistic gifts and a considerable range of subject-matter: He has been hailed as "our most pure, our most detached writer." His best novels are 'Caught' 'Loving', 'Concluding', 'Nothing', all well composed and integrated pieces.

The last of the trio, Graham Green has wielded the largest measure of influence and reputation in the realm of modern fiction. Green had a vision limited by his consciousness of evil in human life : he concentrated on the seamy side of modern life, and his principal characterization ran to a type, that of the moral defective.

His first novel, 'The Man Within', had a historical setting of eighteenth century smuggling, whereas all the others are of contemporary life. In 'It's A Battlefield' (1934) we are in the world of twentieth century police involved in suppressing communist inspired rioting. The full possibilities of Graham Green showed first in 'England Made Me' (1935). Centring on a story of high international finance, this largely consists of a study of moral decline in certain English types as met in Sweden, which is the scene of the novel. In his next three novels Graham Green maintained his detachment as a narrator, avoiding emotional colouring and direct sympathy, but, himself a Roman Catholic he presented life in terms of the faith of the Roman Catholic Church, in the main objectively through his characters, yet with some restrained personal commentary. It is the clear, constant, religious approach that differentiated

these novels of Green's from those of most of his contemporaries. Other novelists dealt with the underworld, as Green did in 'Brighton Rock' (1938); others too treated of the destructive force of materialistic tyranny, as Green did in 'The Power and the Glory' (1940). Only Green wrote in terms of heaven and hell.

In 'The Power and the Glory' Green made an advance in nearly every way. His new theme, that of the struggle between Church and State, transcended the earlier themes. In 'The Heart of the Matter' (1948) Green, except for making the scene of the novel West Africa in the recent war, gave up topicality. It is the human heart that is Green's primary concern here. It is the human soul fighting its battle alone for the ultimate truth underlying the surface presented by the circumstances of the world, and in showing this Graham Green brought the novel close again to the example set by Conrad, the spectacle of man at odds with destiny, though without the colour and poetry of Conrad.

**Ivy Compton Burnett**—The sense of evil we have noted is clearly exemplified in the novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett, a supreme exponent of crime set in a domestic background. Her plots are excellently well-constructed, though the amount of action is quite small. She is a mistress of revealing dialogue which constitutes her chief method of exposition, and her characterization is almost invariably of a high order. Her work really dates from 'Pastors and Masters' (1925), which was followed by some dozen novels including 'Men and Wives' (1931), 'Daughters and Sons' (1937), 'Parents and Children' (1941) and 'The Present and the Past' (1953).

**Elizabeth Bowen**—At mid-century it is the name of Elizabeth Bowen that stands out most prominently among the women novelists. She had little in common with Graham Green, her illustrious contemporary. Certainly for both the human heart was what most interested them, and both felt the pressure of the times upon human character; both, but Elizabeth Bowen especially, watched keenly the disintegration of the survivors of the Edwardian middle class as the conditions which had bred them passed away. But while Elizabeth Bowen, like Greene, had an artistic detachment, she had as well a satiric aloofness of judgement in strong contrast with his Roman Catholicism. In place of his hard, often laconic style, she wrote a delicate, subtle style, with a feminine sensitiveness that sought precision not by brevity but by a patient use of little strokes. To put the



contrast broadly, Greene, his Catholicism apart, drew near to the "tough" writing of Ernest Hemingway, while Elizabeth Bowen was close to Virginia Woolf.

Her approach to life is far more comprehensive than that of the social satirist. With less intensity, less warmth, less richness in her humanity than in Virginia Woolf's, she still has those qualities, and with them an interpretation of life, again less penetrating than Woolf's, but nevertheless getting well beneath the surface. Life in her clear mirror, flows rippling on. The mirror cannot but impose something of a pattern, but the impression her tales always leave is, as with Virginia Woolf's novels, that of continuity : nothing breaks off sharply, the edges of life are undefined. Tragedy and comedy interwine inextricably. Though she employs only in a considerable modified way Virginia Woolf's technique of the flow of the inner consciousness, she does similarly take us into the minds and feelings of her people.

In 'The Heat of the Day' (1949) Elizabeth Bowen attained her peak of artistic achievement. Her picture of war-time London has the quality given by emotion recollected in tranquility, as has the Irish picture in 'The Last September' (1929) : we breathe the essential atmosphere, but only now and then does she give that peculiar vividness which endows a scene with the urgent freshness of the actual moment. On account of her natural aversion from overstatement she does not achieve the full possibilities of her theme, the cancer of treachery which can destroy a man otherwise lovable. The reason which lead Robert to work against his country are not fully developed. Instead we are let into the secrets of Stella's heart, from the time she is warned of her lover's treachery until he confesses it to her. That is the core of the book, a psychological study at once detailed and reticent, suggestive rather than analytical. In her technique one of her outstanding gifts is her skill in developing character and story simultaneously by dialogue : while her people talk, they take on life, they change, and the mechanics of the story move. To sum up, where Virginia Woolf found it necessary to revolutionise the writing of the novel, Elizabeth Bowen showed how it was possible to employ similar talents in the revivifying of a traditional novel.

**Bates, Priestley and Pritchett**—In days when the intellectual novelists seemed afraid to portray the ordinary emotions of ordinary people, and unable to imagine or believe in the reality of human personality, J. B. Priestley in 'Festival at Farbridge' (1951) boldly

returned to the manner of his 'Good Companions' of over twenty years earlier. There in a very English scene, crowded with figures humorously exaggerated in the drawing, he invited us to recognise that what still matters most is the human heartedness of ordinary people and that in 1951, no less than before, energy laughter and romantic love make the world go round.

Other contemporary writers are H. E. Bates and V. S. Pritchett, both primarily devoted to the short story but also occasionally capable of startling novels. Bates's 'The Scarlet Sword' (1950) with its setting in post-partition Kashmir will be of special interest to Indian readers. Priestley published 'Mr. Beluncle' (1951) which is a novel of earlier broad kind. Loosely episodic, it is a satiric comedy of suburbia and it is dominated by the title character a bumptious genteel humbug conceived on the scale and after the manner of Dickens.

**Joyce Cary, C. P. Snow and Anthony Powell**—The novelists who have commanded greatest respect in the fifties are Joyce Cary, C. P. Snow and Anthony Powell. Joyce Cary's early novels about African life ('Mr. Johnson' and 'Aissa Saved') were competent but in no way remarkable. His later work is both more varied and more ambitious, yet even at its best it leaves the reader with a sense of dissatisfaction not altogether easy to account for. The fact is perhaps that despite the thoughtfulness and humanity of the larger design which Cary has sought to impose on his later novels, the elements (incident, dialogue, characterisation) which he uses to make up his pattern are inescapably secondhand—stereotypes which are incapable of successfully communicating his best perceptions.

C. P. Snow's ambitious sequence of 'novels' 'Strangers and Brothers' started to appear in 1940, and is still "in progress" twenty years later. The first two volumes have an uncertainty of touch, which suggests that the writer was still engaged in finding his own characteristic tone of voice as a novelist. What he found in the end, is a surprisingly old-fashioned, almost Trollopian naturalism, which resolutely turns its back on not only all "stream of consciousness" experimentation, but also on any of the complexity of narrative technique which can be learnt from Conrad and Henry James.

Anthony Powell achieved a very modest success in the thirties with a number of satirical novels. Since 1951 he has made a fresh start with a novel sequence whose over-all title, 'The Music of Time' indicates a conscious indebtedness to Marcel Proust. The world he

portrays here is a curiously limited one confined almost exclusively to Old Etonians and their female relatives. Since the novel-sequence is not yet complete, one will have to wait until the sequence is complete in order to judge it fairly. While the total effect so far is diffuse and at times confusing, much of the detail is keenly observed, and in *Widmerpool* Mr. Powell has certainly created a memorable comic character.

Among the recent novelists mention must also be made of Kingsley Amis whose '*Lucky Jim*' (1954) has proved a great success. Iris Murdoch is also a talented novelist. Recently she has published '*The Bell*' (1958) which is essentially a study, penetrating yet compassionately sympathetic, of opposed types of moral and religious conviction. In the list of very young writers about whom we shall hear more in the coming years stand Ernyr Humphreys, P. H. Newby, Nigel Balchin, Miss A. L. Barker, the two Smiths, Emma and Stevie, the two Elizabeths, Taylor and Lake, Miss Julia Strachey and Miss Betty Askwith, whose novel '*A Broken Engagement*' is very gripping indeed.

**The Future of the English Novel**—The tendencies in the late fifties have not yet become conspicuous. Most of the novelists appear to lack the strong sense of purpose and direction. "What is the future of the English novel?" One is tempted to ask. Many will shake their heads and say that future is anything but bright, for most of the novelists lack an intensity of vision, wide sympathy and broad generosity and a real love of life. Yet it is not wise to be pessimistic or play the role of too sure a prophet. "If there is one thing," writes Priestley, "that history teaches us, it is the folly of indulging in premature headshaking. Many a good critic of the past has to come to cut a foolish figure in our eyes because he gravely announced that something was all over when, in truth, we know that it was only just beginning. A hundred years ago, when Jane Austen had been dead ten years and Scott had done his best work and scribblers like Hook represented the art of fiction it might well have been thought, as indeed it was thought, that the English novel was declining into mediocrity. The critics little imagined that it was about to enter into what is perhaps its greatest period; and our prophetic powers are no greater than theirs. The English Novel may yet pour out treason in the old generous fashion; and if it does not, we shall not be poor, for it has already left us a gigantic and imperishable legacy".

## Trends in Modern Fiction

### A Brief Synopsis :

1. Modern fiction is manysided.

2. **General Characteristics**—(i) The influence of psychology :—Under the influence of psycho-analysis the subconscious and the unconscious stratas of mind are explored in the “stream of consciousness” technique which has decayed comprehensiveness of character as also the traditional method of plot-construction. (ii) Predominance of sex :—As a result of Freudian psychology, new biological theories, the invention of contraceptives, and the license generated during the horrors and boredom of the Great War the traditional conception of love has yielded place to the frank portrayal of sex in modern fiction. (iii) Consciousness of form :—As a result of the decrease in creative energy and the disintegration in society, modern novelists have shown great consciousness of form.

3. **The Novel of Ideas**—(i) **H. G. Wells**—He was a missionary among the novelists. His novels can be divided into three classes (a) scientific romances—‘The Time Machine’, ‘The First Man in the Moon’ etc. (b) domestic fiction—‘Kipps’, ‘Tono Bungay’, ‘The History of Mr. Polly’ etc. (c) sociological novels—‘The Shape of Things to Come’ etc.

(ii) **Arnold Bennett**—He followed the “naturalistic” method. He paints his native district, the Five Towns, in all his novels. ‘The Old Wives Tale’ is really a massive work of art. He was at once the historian, the philosopher and the poet of our ordinary human life.

(iii) **John Galsworthy**—He takes sides with the under-dog. ‘The Forsyte Saga’ is a satire on modern humanity. He is a traditional novelist aiming at a well-proportioned combination of plot and character.

**Joseph Conrad**—Besides Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy, Conrad maintained the prestige of the traditional type of novel. He paid more attention to psychological presentation of character. He was mainly a sea-novelist. Life in his novels is a hostile force. ‘Lord Jim’ is his masterpiece.

4. **The Psychological Novel** :—**Henry James**—He was one of the pioneers of the psychological novel. He replaced the primary

interest of story by the fascination of the carefully traced reasoning and feeling which motivated a few figures.

**Stream of Consciousness technique**—The influences (a) Proust (b) Russian novelists (c) The theory of psycho-analysis propounded by Freud and Jung. This technique has resulted into (a) the minimisation of plot (b) decay in the comprehensiveness of character (c) absence of the chronological continuity (d) disappearance of the author as narrator (e) theme limited to a small period of time.

(i) **Dorothy Richardson**—The inner working of the mind of Miriam Henderson, the heroine of 'Pointed Roofs', presented in sequels of the 'Pilgrimage', without personal comment.

(ii) **James Joyce**—His 'Ulysses' concentrates on 24 hrs. of a Dublin day of Leopold Bloom. It symbolically presents the futility of modern life. He has coined a new language.

**Virginia Woolf**—As against the intellectual approach of Joyce, hers is the spiritual and the aesthetic. Her chief works are 'Mrs. Dalloway', 'To the Light House' and 'The Waves'. She considers men and women only comprehensible in their fully setting.

**5. Criticism of contemporary civilization between the Wars**—Both Forester and D. H. Lawrence reacted against contemporary civilization. Their novels had common theme, *e. g.* "right personal relationships". But Forester relied on intelligence, culture and an awakening of heart, while Lawrence relied on passions of the blood.

(i) **D. H. Lawrence**—He led the revolt against reason. His chief works are 'The White Peacock', 'Women in Love', 'Sons and Lovers' and 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'. He evolved a kind of pagan religion and tried to free man from the sterility and boredom of the machine age. He expressed the visions of his brain through symbols.

(ii) **E. M. Forester**—All his novels depict the conflict between "crustaceans" and the "vitalists", *e. g.*, the adherents of lifeless convention and those who take the broad view and let the heart guide them. His chief works are 'Where Angels Fear to Tread', 'Hawarad's End' and 'A Passage to India':

(iii) **Somerset Maugham**—In his novels like 'Of Human Bondage', 'The Moon and Sixpence', 'Cakes and Ale' he reflects the mood of bitter cynicism and frustration which overtook the post-war generation in England and elsewhere.



(iv) **Aldous Huxley**—He was a bitter critic of modern civilization. His chief works are 'Point Counter Point', 'Brave New World', 'Eyeless in Gaza', 'Ape and Essence'. Technically, his supreme achievement is 'Eyeless in Gaza' in which he has shuffled three layers of time.

(v) **J. C. Powys**—'A Glastonbury Romance' has a fantastic story. It displays author's mystic view of life and profound knowledge of psychoanalysis. His 'Owen Glendower' is the greatest example of historical novel in this century.

**6. Regional Novel**—The main regional novelists are Arnold Bennett, Mary Weff, Sheila Kaye Smith, Winifred Holtby and Cardoc Evans.

**7. The Novel after the War**—Since 1939 the English novel appears to have lacked the strong sense of purpose and direction. Concern with evil and violence is the most noteworthy characteristic of the novel of this period.

**The Trinity of Greens**—(a) F. L. Green. (b) Henry Green (c) Graham Green, the greatest of them all. His vision is limited by a consciousness of evil in the universe. His chief works are 'The Man Within', 'England Made Me', 'The Power and the Glory', 'The Heart of the Matter'.

**Ivy Compton Burnett**—She is the supreme exponent of crime set in a domestic background.

**Elizabeth Bowen**—In a limited degree she employs Virginia Woolf's technique in revivifying the traditional type of novel.

**Bates, Priestley and Pritchett** are the writers of novels of earlier broad kind.

**8. The Future of the English Novel**—Since most of the contemporary novelists lack and intensity of vision and a broad sympathy, some critics take a gloomy view of the future of novel. Yet it is not wise to be pessimistic or play the role of too sure a prophet.

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## 2. Psychological Novel

The art of novel writing has developed so rapidly and successfully that it has now practically covered the entire range of human life. Though the primary purpose of novel writing was to impart intellectual pleasure by creating a 'World', full of scenes and situations, men and manners that appealed to the Novelist, but there have been writers who could not avoid or who deliberately aimed to conveying their philosophy of life at the same time as they told a story. This traditional method of novel writing developed successfully in the 18th century with Richardson and Fielding. The traditional novel further developed in the hands of Dickens and Thackeray. But towards the close of the Victorian era the art of novel writing became a different sort of matter. Perhaps it was due to the advancement of psychology that the writers of fiction did not confine themselves to the external lineament, and features of their characters. Thus the influence of psychology, for better or for worse, has given a new turn to fiction and produced revolutionary changes in this branch of literature.

If we trace the development of psychological novel, we may safely find its germ in the tales of Mrs. Gaskell. She wrote such in which she entered into thoughts and wayward moods of children with true insight. Charlotte Bronte was also psychological in the portrait of Lucy Snawe. 'But her 'Ruth' announces the approach of the psychological novel in a restrictive sense. What she did in part was further carried by George Eliot. The general character of her novels may be described, in her own terms, as psychological realism. She sought to do in her novels what Browning, the subtle-souled psychologist, attempted in his poetry. She is not content unless she has minutely explained the motives of her characters and the moral lesson to be learned from them. Her psychological analysis is more evident in 'Daniel Deronda'. Like her, George Meredith is also a realist and psychologist. But while Eliot uses tragedy to teach moral lesson, Meredith depends more upon comedy making vice not terrible but ridiculous. Most of his characters are of higher ranks of society and they are elaborately analysed. In 'The Egoist' he reached the climax of his art.

Though these writers provided a critical analysis of the inner conscious of their characters, they did not leave the traditional method of giving external details and stories in definite sequence. Apart from these writers, all the other minor and major novelists were traditional till we reach Henry James who again kicked the ball and set it rolling. The high water mark of the career of Henry James was reached in the three novels : 'The Wings of the Dove', 'The Ambassador' and 'The Golden Bowl'. In these novels he achieved a subtlety of character study, a delicacy of perception and an elaboration of artistic presentation which ranked him high among modern novelists. He was little concerned with external events and almost entirely with the detailed and elaborate study of the subtlest shades of human reaction to the situations which he conceived. It was a great innovation in the field of fiction, but perhaps the time was not ripe to receive the new technique, and that is why he could not gain popularity inspite of his being a superb artist. However, among the pioneers of psychological novel Henry James deserves a special mention. In the beginning of the 20th century it was he who proceeded to make his main concern the inside rather than the outside of his characters, and to replace the primary interest of story by the fascination of the carefully traced reasoning and feeling which motivated a few figures. This was a narrowing of the broader human interest of the novel to a more specialised study of motives and character, and the general tendency, towards the twentieth century, was indeed in the direction of making the interest of the intellect predominate over the love of a story.

It was in the second decade of the 20th century that there came an effectual and cogent reaction against the traditional novel due to the influence of Russian novelists, especially of Turgenev, Tchekov, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. The seeds of psychological novel which hitherto had remained dormant in the soil of English fiction, began to shoot forth into beautiful saplings with first shower of Russian clouds. Strictly speaking, modern psychological novel was born between 1913—1915 with the publication of Marcel Proust's 'Remembrance of Things Past' in 1913 and Miss Dorothy Richardson's first volume of 'Pilgrimage' in 1915. James Joyce also began publishing in 1914, in serial form, a novel entitled 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.' The three writers, Marcel Proust in France, Dorothy Richardson in England and James Joyce in Ireland were writing to cope with inner problems and project their inner life before the world. This was a mere coincidence that these

novelists, unknown to each other, three distinctly different talents and temperaments, were writing works destined to have a remarkable influence on English fiction, by turning it away from external to inner reality, from the outward world to the hidden world of fantasy and reverie.

Dr. Sigmund Freud appeared on the scene with his brilliant thesis on psycho-analysis which violently shook the foundations of human thought. It was revealed that the human consciousness has very deep layers and buried under the conscious region are the sub-conscious and unconscious regions of the human psyche. Infinitesimal buried thoughts keep coming to the surface from the vast oceans of the sub-conscious. According to Freud human thinking suffers greatly from sexual obsessions and every action of man—even his dreams, reveries, half-expressed and unexpressed thoughts—could be traced back to his sex-instincts. People now began to look at things from a new perspective. Experiments were made in the light of psycho-analysis. 'Stream of Consciousness' was one such experiment.

It was William James who, first of all, named the 'Stream of Consciousness' in his admirable book 'Principles of Psychology' published in 1890. The metaphor was invoked by him to describe the flux of the mind, its continuity, and yet its continuous change. In the words of C. E. M. Joad, "This continuing consciousness constitutes the thread of the individual's personality, it is like a river which, whether running fast or slow, speeding between steep and narrow banks, or seeping into the marshes of envioning flats, remains the same river. Or, to change the metaphor, consciousness as normally conceived is like the thread of a necklace along which are strung the beads of our psychological moods and states. That there should be a continuing entity of this sort is a necessary condition of personality. For consciousness is the indispensable continuing thread which, running through all our separate moods, binds them together into a whole. It is this whole that we call the 'ego' or the personality."

The stream of consciousness opened out new horizons for the art of the novelist. The exponents of this new technique believed that all reality lies in the consciousness," and that "our consciousness which is part of our soul does not proceed logically or coherently." Generally it follows a freakish association of ideas whose progress cannot be charted. A continuous action seemed to

them quite unlike ordinary experience. They felt that the sense of life is often best rendered by an abrupt passing from one series of events, one group of characters, one centre of consciousness to another. So they deviated from the convention of chronological continuity. They broke up time into atomic bits and scattered them as they liked, whereas the Victorian novelists "clung on to the calendar and clock." That is why we see that whereas the traditional novels covered years or generations, the whole action of modern novels takes place in a week or a day. They take no account of time. The modern novelist is not obliged to go forward chronologically from the cradle to the grave. He flashes back, he looks before, he shifts backwards and forwards. The annihilation of the tyranny of Time necessitated the minimisation of plot, almost complete elimination of action, and the elaborate description of characters by describing their individual appearances, gestures, circumstances and physical habits. Plot action, character and thought are drowned in the stream of consciousness. Only consciousness remains—bottomless and endless.

Leon Edel has beautifully explained the difference between the old and the new technique of the novel. The old-time reader of novels sat down with his book and made a simple demand upon the author: "Beguile me, offer me comedy and tears, tell me about droll people and lovers, and a story that will keep me rooted to the spot and my eyes glued to the page." The case is reversed when we come to the psychological novel. It is the author who says to the reader; "Here is the artistic record of a mind, at the very moment it is thinking. Try to penetrate within it—It is you, not I, who will piece together any 'story' there may be." Flaubert wrote long ago that "the artist ought to be in his work like God in creation, invisible, and all-powerful; let him be felt everywhere but not seen." The thoughts, whether through stream of consciousness or internal monologue, must speak for themselves without his intervening as narrator. By this process of involving us directly in the mental experience of the characters, the psychological novel has added a significant dimension to the art of prose-fiction.

Dorothy Richardson is the first novelist to use the 'stream of consciousness'—method deliberately and almost exclusively to portray character. Miriam Henderson is the heroine of 'Pointed Roofs', and her stories are continued in a series of sequels, collectively



called 'The Pilgrimage'. Dorothy Richardson, in exposing the working of Miriam Henderson's mind, does not analyse, or comment, or explain. Her chief aim is to convey to the reader "life at first hand."

The moments of Miriam's consciousness pass one by one or overlapping ; moments tense with vibration, moments drawn out fine, almost to snapping-point, There is no drama, no situation, no set scene. Nothing happens. It is just life going on and on. It is Miriam's stream of consciousness going on and on. Dorothy Richardson gives us a wonderful insight into the mind of a woman who though sometimes annoying, is undoubtedly a strange and interesting person. The 'Pilgrimage' books mark an epoch in the technical development of the novelist's art.

Marcel Proust's Remembrance of 'Things Past', in twelve volumes, seems to be a far more lasting work than the former. "In the case of Proust," says Leon Edel, "continual illness had fostered the living and reliving of his novel within the tight walls of a cork-lined room from which he tried to shut out the sound and dust of the world—almost as if the room itself had become his very mind in which thoughts could flow. unmolested by the ruder temperatures and sharper lights of the world outside. As in psycho-analysis the patient is isolated from external stimuli that his mind may play over his past and link it to the present, so Proust in his sound-proofed isolation could practise his extra-ordinary self-analysis. The present assailed him too violently ; immediate experience erupted into allergies and the ills of the flesh. In the past there was tranquility and discovery. By the process of remembering he found himself."

Unlike Proust, Joyce wanted to catch the present. For him time present was all-important—a continuation of present, in which the past inevitably lingered. Publication of 'Ulysses' in 1922 was a thunder clap of 'Madame Bovary' three-quarters of a century before. Tracing a not very attractive, though very human, 'hero' through some twenty-four hours of a Dublin day, Joyce portrayed the outer world through the inner workings of his hero's consciousness, introduced into the flow of consciousness a symbolic phantasmagoria, and all the time played with the English language, now with strange effectiveness, now merely with obscure pedantry, and again with pukish humour. Nothing of the traditional novel was left. Listening to the internal monologue of his characters, the reader

smelt the flesh and dust of existence, but continuity of story was gone, plot was indiscernible, the theme was deeply buried, and to the ordinary reader many a stretch was unintelligible. In England the book was banned as morally offensive, but many copies came in unobserved from France, and the world of letters and its hangers—on were for many years sure that a great experiment had been successfully achieved.

Joyce set out to give a very acute expression of the breakdown of modern civilization. Joyce, indeed, was setting himself an almost impossible task, one which T. S. Eliot, in appreciating 'Ulysses', expressed as "giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history." To do this he went back to the Dublin of his youth, and imagined with unflagging detail the life, for some twenty hours, of an advertising agent of thirty-eight, an Irish Jew, Leopold Bloom. From the early morning in June 1904 when Bloom gets up and makes his wife's breakfast until the early hours of the next day Joyce exposes even more than Bloom himself could know about himself and his environment. We have the sense of the teeming life of a city seen under a microscope. As Bloom drifts through his typical worthless day we go everywhere with him: a cemetery, streets, shops, public houses, lavatories, bedrooms, offices—all are there, the trivial daily round of an ineffective, but bustling sensualist, who, though constantly frustrated and his self-sufficiency insidiously attacked, finds life tolerably liveable, so long as the life force jostles him along. As Joyce shows it us, it is a dreary spectacle, in which hardly anything exists to stir the reader to admiration, love, pity, sympathy or even hatred. It joins T. S. Eliot's indictment on the Waste Land, and shares Aldous Huxley's disgust at the human animal. It is the twilight of an age, and its chill has infected the author.

The basic technique for the exposure of Leopold Bloom and his wife is that of internal monologue. The reader is inside Bloom's mind, in the flow of his inconsecutive, partially formulated thoughts and transient feelings, and Bloom is at the mercy of his whims and of the chance stimuli of his passage. Bloom's psychological process is one of expansion and contraction: an encounter, a memory, an association of ideas, start his mind into extra activity, which, having reached a climax, effs away. The most brilliant and sustained piece of internal monologue is the concluding reverie of Molly Bloom, but

so sustained a passage could come only this once, for life does not allow in any ordinary twenty-four hours for much extended reverie. As for the psychology as a whole, it is not only the product of Joyce's obviously deep personal penetration of human nature but the result of an intimate knowledge of the work of Freud, and especially of Jung, whose teaching of psycho-analysis was centred at Zurich at the time that Joyce was writing 'Ulysses' there.

At the same time, in the early twenties, Virginia Woolfe dealt the traditional novel another blow, perhaps more effective because she was more restrained. She had early become acquainted with 'Ulysses' in its serial publication in 'The Little Review'. So, in 1919, she began her attack with an article on modern fiction in which she pleaded that "the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe". Looking at the novels of Bennett, Wells and Galsworthy she found that, inspite of their substantial picture of life and the abundant vitality of their characters, the reality of life escaped them. All three novelists were adjudged "materialists" because of their preoccupation with the outside of life; and by "materialists" she said she meant "that they write of unimportant things; that they spend immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring." For her, the true and the enduring resided in the very essence of life, the ever-changing, ever-fluctuating consciousness, continuously affected from without and ceaselessly working its transformations within. "Life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end." "Is it not", she asked, "the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?" Because she found in 'Ulysses' an attempt "to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messagas through the brain", she found Joyce, in contrast to her materialists, spiritual.

The work of Woolf, though she was stimulated by the experimental work of Joyce in 'Ulysses' and though she developed a technique in some way resembling his, is very different in essentials from Joyce's. The demands that makes are upon spiritual understanding and aesthetic sensibility rather than upon the intellect. Her concern is for beatuy, and she is worlds apart from

the sordid life of Joyce's Dublin. If at times she expresses a feeling of meaninglessness of life, it is only in a temporary through in the sea of life : even if she felt herself in the Waste Land she would raise her eyes and her heart to the stars, because in 1941 her spirit failed and she could not, she died.

Her first attempt in a new manner was 'Jacob's Room'. We see Jacob from childhood, in one place after another, as though a family album of snapshots had been brought to life. Woolf is not yet in full control of her medium. The weakness is that the scenes do not all contribute alike to our knowledge of Jacob. But in this first attempt she had succeeded in conveying the intangible spirit of life flowing and ebbing not only in Jacob but in all around him.

In her next novel, 'Mrs. Dalloway' (1925), Virginia Woolf showed that she had learnt how to select only those impressions that were needed to build up the picture. She also takes us more continuously through the thoughts, feelings and impressions of the main characters. As Mrs. Dalloway shops or talks, dresses or eats, we are inside her mind, seeing her as she sees herself, sharing her memories and knowing the people she knows or has known through her own eyes. Nor instead of our following chronologically through the years, all is presented in the present. We are with Mrs. Dalloway for only some fifteen hours, from nine o'clock on a lovely June morning when she goes to the florist's to arrange her flowers for her party that night until the early hours of the next day when her guests depart.

After these two attempts Virginia Woolf achieved in 'To the Lighthouse' (1927) the complete success of her new method. Now she leaves the bustle of London life for the more self-contained setting of a house in the Hebrides, a small family and three guests. In the long first section we see these people for only a few hours; and nothing really happens. It is remarkable how much in a small space Virginia Woolf builds up. This first section presents the whole life, works and personality of Mrs. Ramsay as summed up on that evening. The novel, indeed, seems in a way complete at that stage, for the short following section is a poetic elegy on the uninhabited house ten years later, Mrs. Ramsay being now dead. But when in the concluding section the house is again inhabited by some of the same people, Virginia Woolf has a further purpose, to show the continued force of Mrs. Ramsay's personality, as she does symbolically.



Excellent though 'To The Lighthouse' is, her supreme achievement is 'The Waves' (1931). In so far as we are submerged almost completely in the waves of consciousness of the characters (a part of the meaning of the title) it is less satisfactory as a novel, at any rate much more difficult of complete apprehension, but as a vision of life it has the complex harmonies the suggestive mystery and beauty of great poetry. The 'Waves' says Dr. A. S. Collins, "is a prose poem of the human consciousness, conceived and executed by a wise sensitive and skilled artist." Where 'Mrs. Dalloway' had given Clarissa as she was on one June day, and 'To The Lighthouse' had presented a small group of people seen twice in ten years, now six lines, beginning with three boys and three girls at a preparatory school, expand from childhood to middle age in a series of scenes spaced over the years. Woolf is the supreme novelist of the mystery of personal life, that strange fluid entity that is ourselves. The individual is indeed a multiple, complex personality whose components merge into one another : as Bernard expresses it—"it is not one life that I look back upon ; I am not one person ; I am many people ; I do not altogether know who I am—Junny, Susan, Neville; Rhoda or Louis : or how to distinguish my life from theirs." Therefore, Woolf thinks that men and women are incomprehensible except in their full setting. Moreover, what is visible is but a fragments of the whole, for below the surface are the depths of consciousness, from which from time to time only small emanations proceed, and these are often unpredictable. Thus she presents her men and women with a humility rare in a novelist, seeming to declare that personality must remain finally inscrutable, beyond complete understanding.

The stream of consciousness method climaxed in the hands of Virginia Woolf. But in the hands of lesser novelists it is not without danger. In the novels of Gertrude Stein and Lionel Britton it tends to produce a meaningless nonsense. Take this example from Britton's 'Hunger and Love' :—

"Five minutes late ! Seven days notice. Like drowning a kitten. 'I'll take that bridge,——'"

Referring to this preponderance of the psychological element in modern fiction, F. L. Lucas said, "Its figures have so much Psychology that they have no room for character. It has worked up the weakness of Hamlet and forgotten its fineness." Prof. B Ifor Evans also complains that in the modern novel nothing happens



and "without the story fiction cannot live." He thinks that it is only the novel of character and manner that will outlive these methods. We can only leave this 'imaginative shorthand' to Time and await its decision, but Time is the slowest critic of us all.

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## Psychological Novel

### A Brief Synopsis

1. Towards the close of the 19th century the advances in psychology revolutionised the traditional novel.

2. **Beginnings** : (a) Mrs. Gaskell analyses the moods of children and Charlotte Bronte gives a psycho-analysis in 'Ruth', George Eliot presents psychological realism specially in her 'Daniel Deronda,' and George Meredith in 'Egoist' but they retain the traditional story also.

(b) Henry James was the innovator in 'The Wings of the Dove', 'The Ambassador' and 'The Golden Bowl'. He subordinated the story to an analysis of the inner springs of action.

(c) Influenced by the Russians, the three writers Marcel Proust in France, Dorothy Richardson in England and James Joyce in England effected a revolution in the world of letters, by turning fiction away from external to inner reality.

3. **Psycho-analysis and the Stream of Consciousness technique** : Probing through the subconscious and the unconscious Sigmund Freud traced human behaviour to the repressed instincts of man like the sex-obsessions. William James used the term "stream of consciousness" to describe the flux of the mind with its continuity in the midst of its continuous changes. It implies that all reality lies in our consciousness, proceeding, not logically and coherently, but through a freakish association of ideas. Hence they violated the conventional chronological continuity by presenting consciousness of the moment flashing backward into the past and leaping forward into the future—it demands from the reader an endeavour to apprehend the inner mental experience of characters.

4. **Dorothy Richardson** : The inner working of the mind of Miriam Henderson, the heroine of 'Pointed Roofs', presented in sequels of the 'Pilgrimage', without personal comment.

5 **Marcel Proust** in 'Remembrance' carries on self-analysis of the past, divorced from external stimuli, because confined to his room in sickness.

6. **James Joyce** : As against Proust, Joyce catches the continuity of the present in which he lingers. His 'Ulysses' concentrates on 24 hrs. of a Dublin day of Leopold Bloom and presents the underworld through the inner working of his mind. His psychological process is one of expansion and contraction, and through it we have a sense of the teeming life of the city seen under a microscope. It symbolically expresses the futility of modern life—no formal plot or character.

7: **Virginia Woolf** attacked the "materialism" of the traditional novelists because they dealt with externals. But the essence of life resides in ever changing and ever fluctuating consciousness. As against the intellectual approach of Joyce, hers is spiritual and aesthetic, with no sense of the futility of life. 'Jacob's Room' conveys Jacobs' spirit of life through successive snap-shots. In her 'Mrs. Dalloway' 15 hrs. of her present life, through her stream of consciousness, project her whole life without time sequence. 'To The Lighthouse' presents psychologically the whole life of Mrs. Ramsay in a few hrs. stay in a lonely island. 'The Waves', her supreme achievement, is a prose poem of human consciousness—which considers individual as a multiple complex personality with various components mutually merging. She considers men and women comprehensible only in their full setting.

8. **Conclusion**—dangers of the stream of consciousness technique.

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### 3. Historical Novel

**What is a Historical Novel ?**

History is an account of the facts of the past; fiction is imaginary, while history is something real. The historical novelist takes certain events and characters of history and weaves around them a fictitious enchantment. In making use of the facts the novelist does not follow the method of the historian, but of the artist. He selects facts and arranges them according to his own choice. In short, he takes into account what may be described as the spirit and atmosphere of history. A historical novelist reconstructs imaginatively the life of the past. He does not allow historical facts to impede his fiction, nor does he permit his fiction to violate the significance of historical facts.

The story of a historical novel, as the term suggests, is set in some by-gone period. But it differs from history. To present and interpret facts is the historian's business, to summon up a past epoch, to show men and women alive in it and behaving as they must have behaved in the circumstances, is the labour and joy of the genuine historical novelist. A true historical novel is, in fact, a novel of manners. It avoids the well-known events and personages of the period in which its story is set. It recreates the life as it was lived in that period. And the life of a period is the life lived by a whole people, not that lived by kings and princes alone. It, therefore, subordinates historical events and personages to the expression of the life of an epoch, and regards them only as part or as illustration of that life. It deals with the past as if the past were the period in which it is being written though in a language intelligible to-day. "The historical novel, then," says E. A. Baker, "is just such a novel of manners as a contemporary might have written, though in language intelligible to-day." Thus, had 'Tom Jones' been written to-day, it would have been a historical novel with its story set in the eighteenth century.

**Circumstances leading to the birth of the historical novel**—Good historical novels date back only from the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is so because till that time the difference between history and fiction was not clearly marked and understood. The word 'romance' comprehended both. It was only during the nineteenth century that great historians like Claudon, Hume and Gibbon came

into prominence. They taught the world real meaning and import of history. Strangely enough, it was in the nineteenth century that the novel established itself as an independent branch of literature and as the story of an experience in human life under the stress of emotion. In other words the novelists began taking interest in human beings as human beings. The individual, irrespective of his rank, claimed representation in novel no less than in the Parliament. This is how the novel became the epic of democracy, dealing with the joys and sorrows, the problems and the experiences of the common folk. The almost simultaneous advent of the historians and the novelists paved the way for historical novels. It may also be remembered that during this period nations were making history. The American War of Independence and the French Revolution gave an opportunity to the individual to fight for his rights. Both these happenings also made the time ripe for the advent of the historical novel.

**The Precursors of historical novel**—The seeds of the historical novel were present in the Gothic romances. As a matter of fact the Gothic revival was a revival of interest not only in ghosts, but also in history. Yet the Gothic novels were not historical novels. They lacked life; the predominating element in them was that of horror. The Gothic writers lacked the historical imagination. They did not realise that, in order to give any semblance of life to their revocation of bygone ages, they must have a familiar knowledge of how people lived in those ages. The secret histories of Mrs. Manley and Mrs. Hewood have some elements in them of historical novel. The historical interest was further taken up by Abbe Prevost's tales 'Romance of the 17th Century'. The historical plays of Shakespeare gave much material to romances of the seventeenth century. In the novels of Delony, Lodge and Nash, there appear almost by chance some historical events and characters. Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* is a romantic novel in which the pseudo history of the days of the knights and tournaments is fitted into the frame-work of phantoms. Among the pioneers of the historical novel the name of Mrs. Radcliffe also deserves mention. Radcliffe and her imitators do not give us the atmosphere, manners and characters of the age. In the 'Mistries of Udolpho', a story dealing with the event of 1584, French operas and French manners are spoken of as dominating in the world. The characters have the sensibility and elegance which were the fashions of the later eighteenth century. One thing,

however, Mrs Radcliffe did contribute to the development of the romantic historical novel, namely local scenery. It is the scenic setting which, perhaps more than anything else, distinguishes the historical novels of the period from precedings novels and has proved its most enduring legacy to the subsequent novels.

**The Father of historical novel-Scott**—The credit of being the father of English historical novel goes to Sir Walter Scott. His novels are a combination of adventure, realistic sketch of manner, and the saner elements of Gothic romance. He endeavoured to mould the loose romantic epic to the form of the historical drama. His romances have in every instance double plots. There are the deeds of aristocracy and there is the commonality among whom, as in Shakespeare's histories, appear comic characters. His plots are generally loose but he tries to conceal this fault in the picturesque description of the romantic poetry. His descriptions are a wavering between the real and the ideal. Upon the drama of adventure with its bright background, Scott threw the shadows of the superstition, fanaticism and crime.

Like Shakespeare, Scott compressed events, changed their order and introduced into his novels events which had never occurred at all. Scott was, however, not so skilled in manipulating history as Shakespeare. The main interest in his historical novel is often not historical and the historical interest is almost always divided with a purely fictitious interest. In 'Waverly' the hero and the heroine are not historical. The same is true of 'Old Mortality', 'Ivanhoe' and 'The Abbot'. In adopting this method of dealing with history Scott was able to give within the vaguely defined boundaries of fact and legend a very free play to his imagination. The real power of Scott's novels lies in the revelation of human nature which is practically the same in all time. Love and hatred, faithfulness and treachery, as shown in the Scottish people, are true to human nature for all climes and for all ages. The novel he wrote is essentially, as Fielding's "a human epic" but placed back as he chose a few years or many centuries.

Scott avoided pedantic realism on the one hand and a purely romantic approach to history on the other. He was successful in mixing fiction with historical veracity. "Hitherto Romance and Realism had been sworn foes. It was the realism of Nash and Greene that had given the first flow to medieval romance; a more effective flow had been struck by the artistry of Defoe, and now,



when the literary tide was flowing strongly for romance once more, Scott, instead of placing them in violent opposition as medievalists like Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe were doing, blended them together." (Compton-Rickett)

Scott chose a long period for his stories. Some of the stories are set in the eleventh ('Count Robert of Paris') and twelfth ('Ivanhoe') centuries, and some others in the late eighteenth century ('The Heart of Midlothian'). His most successful stories are those which are set in the sixteenth ('The Monastery', 'The Abbot', 'Kenilworth'), seventeenth ('The Bride of Lammermoor', 'The Fortunes of Nigel'), and eighteenth ('Guy Mannering', 'Old Mortality', 'Rob Roy', 'The Heart of Midlothian') centuries. On the other hand stories like 'The Talisman' and 'Count Robert of Paris' which are set in earlier periods are not so successful. Scott lost his force as he wandered away from the solid ground of contemporary reality. He could best interpret and reconstruct the near past. His favourite periods were those which were not very remote—from the Reformation to the last civil struggles of the eighteenth century. He organises his subjects round the great religious or political conflicts which during these two hundred years most seriously impaired the moral unity of the Scottish people.

The debt of the English novel at the time to Scott was considerable. "His was the alchemy that transmuted the 'horrid' elements into the pure gold of the creative imagination. What Richardson, Fielding and Smollett had done in holding a mirror up to the eighteenth century way of life Scott did for the remote centuries of which his contemporaries knew nothing. He took names and dates from the history primer and transformed them into literature. He made dry bones live. Like an enchanter he walked through the tombs of time and quickened into life their ghostly inhabitants. There had been scattered attempts before Scott at the historical novel; but from now on it became the goal of almost every serious novelist to discover and work some new vein in the dark backward and abysm of time" (S. D. Neill).

There may since have been more accurate interpretations of history, but Scott was an artist, not a scholar. He violated chronology; he invented situations; but in making the past come alive he was gloriously successful. He saw history as a pageant sweeping by with the tableaux, characters and moments of high drama. But behind the changing scenes was a movement, a pattern, which he

discerned and tried to interpret. His view of history was Elizabethan rather than modern—he saw the great struggles as expression of moral destiny, not as a record of events. The actors in the drama knew their parts and were impelled to play them. Scott depicted their behaviour, but he did not inquire too closely into causes and motives or attempt for the most part to explore the psychology of his characters. It is on this point that he differs so much from the present-day writers of historical fiction. If he glamourised the past it was partly because he saw in the past centuries the values which modern life was rapidly destroying. Above all, it was the poetry of distance that exercised its magic upon him, drawing him, fascinated, towards a visionary magnificence, a richness and a glory. When he approached the less remote past the attraction was warmer and more saddening. He drew near to catch the last flicker of the flames before the grey ashes cooled for ever.

**Alexander Dumas**—Scott, however, is not the most perfect exponent of the historical novel, 'That honour "of writing a historical novel completely free from slavery to history" goes to the French novelist Alexander Dumas. With Dumas the historical novel "is more than magnetized history; it is history completely polarized," In his 'Three Musketeers' "facts are but atoms eddying in the current of the master's genius into a stream of unified portrayal." The historical novels of Dumas, it may be noted, are independent of historical truth. What we get in his novels is not history but "the romantic polarization of history," But the novels do not give an impression of historical falseness because they are informed and saturated with an ideal.

**Eliza Bray and Horace Smith**—Among the English successors to Scott first in the field was Mrs. Anna Eliza Bray. Beginning her romancing in 1825, she gained a public three years later by 'The Protestant', the subject of which is the persecution of the Protestants under Queen Mary Tudor. Though purely historical in intent, the romance had the appearance of a flaming brand, thrown by the high church party into the angry debate over Catholic emancipation. Horace Smith also practised the historical novel. In 'Brambletye House' he made passably vivid the vagabond condition of the cavaliers during the supremacy of Cromwell. He drew good sketches of Milton and Marvel, of Charles the Second, Rochester Nell Gwyn and Lady Castleman. The most generous judgment

that can be passed upon his work as a whole is that he endeavoured to arrive at the truth of history.

**G. P. R. James** :—From the productivity of Scott it was inferred that a writer's talent should be measured by the literary output. Between 1825 and 1850 G. P. R. James wrote fully a hundred novels and tales. Whether he chose as his scene England, France, Italy, or Germany, all his historical romances were constructed according to one formula. They commonly opened with two horsemen riding in the midst of grand or beautiful scenery, or with an invocation to them before they were introduced. There were always lovely heroines whose figures harmonized with the landscape, and sweet and soft moralizings. All this was but preliminary to being brought face to face with great historical characters—a Philip, a Louis, Henry the Eighth, or Cardinal Wolsey—described minutely and conscientiously.

**Bulwer-Lytton** :—In Bulwer Lytton's novels such as 'Rienzi' and 'The Last Days of Pompeii', historical fiction attains maturity. In them we find the historical spirit distinctly guiding the novelist's art. Bulwer Lytton does not merely gather historical details to give scenery and romantic atmosphere to his novels. He attempts to reconstruct the history of the time completely, and to present that history in relation to individual life.

It will be remembered that the usual method of the historical romancers anterior to Scott was to select a group of historical characters, and to invent for them a series of adventures. What they really did was to write a Smollett novel, manipulated by characters bearing historical names. Scott brought together historical characters and events, and characters and events wholly fictitious. 'The Last Days of Pompeii' was a successful novelty. Bulwer climbed Mt. Vesuvius, studied Italian antiquities, observed Italian manners, and had behind all a wide reading in Latin literature and Greek philosophy. He realized in his imagination Pompeii and its decadent life just before the eruption of Vesuvius, and then, not having any historical characters with contemporary biographies as a guide, he created imaginary characters such as he thought were in harmony with the period. Probably no historical romance has had more readers than 'The Last Days of Pompeii'.

**'Henry Esmond'** :—Thackeray's 'Henry Esmond' takes the historical novel a stage further. Written in a style of easy urbanity,

it evokes the age of Queen Anne—the world of Swift, Steele, Harley and Bolingbroke, the world of dastardly Mohocks, the notorious Lord Mohun and his most distinguished victim, the Duke of Hamilton. The story, concerned with an eccentric Catholic family, loyal to the Stuarts, is presented against a contemporary background of political and religious bigotry. Beatrix Esmond is, next to Becky Sharp, the cleverest of all Thackeray's women, and she has a fascination which Becky lacked. Esmond, with melancholy languishing on his eyelashes, and full of pathetic resignation, is surely the least vital hero in fiction. The last scenes, written with white hot irony, show Beatrix, impelled by vanity, ruining the Stuart cause for which her brother had risked his life.

In 'Esmond' Thackeray undoubtedly felt the influence of Scott. But he handled his historical materials in a different way, and his novel reproduces the age it depicts with a minuteness and fidelity, in style and tone and substance, such as Scott never attempts and nowhere rivals. By allowing such things as conscience, hesitation and doubt, and conflict between love and duty to come into the novel and dwell there side by side with geographical realism, Thackeray makes the historical novel the novel of the soul. In doing this he has completed the work of his predecessors in historical fiction. As Bliss Perry observes, "Scott and Dumas made history the bondmaiden of romance; Bulwer made historical investigation the companion of romance; Thackeray made history the master of romance. These are the three stages of the evolution of the historical novel."

**Difference between Scott and Victorian writers of Historical Novel :—**The line of historical novel continues unbroken throughout the Victorian age. But it undergoes a change. Dickens and Thackeray were not attracted by the Middle ages; but 'The Cloister and the Hearth' and 'Hereward' and 'Ramola' prove the interest of their writers in the more distant past. Yet the use which Reade and Kingsley and George Eliot made of history was not exactly that which Scott made of it. There is less romance and there is more laborious realism in these novels than in Scott's. The spirit of the age demanded of the novelists that they should be learned, profound, thoughtful, philosophic teachers and guides of the people. This mood of mind produced its effect : the historical novelist had at least to appear high built in his learning. He might study a library of



books, as Charles Reade did for 'The Cloister and the Hearth'; or he might follow the example of George Eliot, who not only read widely, but even spent six weeks at Florence in order to learn what manner of men and women dwelt there. Owing to the prevalence of this spirit, 'Hypatia' is crammed with Alexandrian philosophy. 'Romola' is full of the attempt at religious reform associated with the name of Savonarola, and even Reade, lover of the drama and of action as he was, feels it his duty to lay bare before the reader the springs of the Protestant Reformation and of humanism. After Scott we see even in the historical novel traces of the tendency to realism.

**'The Cloister and the Hearth'** :—After writing many novels of contemporary life Charles Reade wrote one great historical novel, 'The Cloister and the Hearth'. The difference between novel and romance may be illustrated by a comparison between the Waverley novels and 'The Cloister and the Hearth'. Scott rightly spoke of his stories as romances; but Reade's realism clung to him in the treatment of history, as well as in his tales of contemporary life. Far from being, like Scott, attracted in boyhood by instinct to the Middle ages, Reade had hitherto been rather markedly indifferent to and ignorant of them. And yet the picture of the fifteenth century in Holland, Germany and Italy, as it is painted in 'The Cloister and the Hearth', rivets attention, lingers in the memory and commands belief. 'The Cloister and the Hearth' is great because of its broad and deep humanity and its splendid subject. It is, as the title suggests, a story of the strife between two of the most potent elements of humanity, religion on the one hand, and the family affections on the other; and the character of the husband monk Gerard and his beautiful wife Margaret Brandt are creations which enrich art. It is great, again, because of its immense scope and variety. It traverses Medieval Europe from the North Seas to the Mediterranean, producing everywhere the same impression of reality and truth. 'The Cloister and the Hearth' is a magnificent success, ranking not far below the very greatest of English historical novels. In his own generation only 'Esmond', and in the generation before only the best of the Waverleys deserve to rank above Reade's masterpiece.

**Charles Kingsley**—Charles Kingsley also had very great tact in selecting dramatic crises for the climax of his romances. 'Hypatia'



still remains the sublimest subject that historical fiction has appropriated to its use—the death struggle between Greek and Christian civilization in the fifth century. He was out of patience with a tendency in the thought of his time to exalt Greek letters and philosophy, at the expense of Christianity and the art and literature that have come in its train. This paganism he set out to counteract in 'Hypatia'. A second purpose is unmistakably conveyed in his subtitle to 'Hypatia', 'New Foes with an Old Face'. Kingsley was bitterly anti-Roman, and wished to arrest the movement towards Rome that Newman had given the Church of England. These ulterior aims lent to 'Hypatia' a modern tone, making out of it a novel of aggressive ideas. Another important historical novel of his is 'Westward Ho!' which deals with the Elizabethan age of the seadogs—Drake and Hawkins. His last attempt in historical novel is 'Hereward the Wake'. Nothing he has written is comparable to Reade's masterpiece. In 'Westward Ho !' and in 'Hereward' we get by fits the spirit of the Elizabethan adventures and of the sons of the Vikings, but we are not carried back into their life.

'Romola'—Though George Eliot was chiefly concerned in her novels with provincial England, in 'Romola' she turned to Italian Renaissance. The background of the novel is Florence at the end of the fifteenth century. With characteristic energy and thoroughness George Eliot spent six months in Florence, notebook in hand; she read countless histories and memoirs and then made her selection. Ignoring the highlights of that dramatic period, she took an obscure incident in the revolt against the monk and concentrated all her powers on throwing it into relief. Romola, the daughter of an old blind scholar, is like George Eliot's other heroines, born for disillusionment when they are attracted by worldly values. She is bewitched and ultimately betrayed by the handsome Greek stranger Tito, whose self-indulgence leads him to utter perfidy. When finally Tito is murdered by a benefactor he has treacherously betrayed, Romola's disappointed love turns to despair. Concurrently her trust in Savonarola is destroyed when she realizes that he is falling away from his high principles. Only the stern realization that her duty lies in self-sacrifice eventually saves Romola. This study of the fascinating Greek and his unmasking, together with the awakening of the infatuated Romola, is the work of a lucid intelligence marshalling its powers in the service of ethical determinism. But of the atmosphere of Renaissance Florence there is

hardly a trace. 'Romola' does not carry conviction of the historical genius of the writer. D. G. Rossetti, one of the most competent judges as to the theme, though that George Eliot had not quite succeeded in entering into Italian life. George Eliot did not of her own impulse conceive scenes and characters under the condition of another country; and so, while the book is stately and grand, the movement is stiff; and the familiar touches of nature in her English novels are worth more than all the learning with which the Italian one is loaded.

**'Owen Glendower' :—**Among the modern writers of historical fiction the name of John Cowper Powys stands prominently. After finishing, 'Glastonbury Romance' he wrote 'Owen Glendower' which is perhaps the greatest example of the historical novel in this century. Owen Glendower is the Welsh prince of Shakespeare's 'Henry IV', and in the hands of Powys the man, the prince and the age, and the early fifteenth century are shown with all the vital complexity characteristic of the treatment in 'A Glastonbury Romance'. It is on the grand scale : one has the national scene, English and Welsh, the political, religious and social aspects, soldiers, courtiers and peasants, fighting, loving, worshipping, singing, plotting. Medieval religion and Welsh mysticism clearly had a great appeal to Powys and he is deeply learned in them. The main difference between Powys and earlier writers of historical fiction is that his technique is very much influenced by the modern psychology. His technique is to present both the inner and outer life, and many of his historical figures have dark twists of soul and a tortured eroticism like his moderns. The novel is indeed a wonderful application to the past of the psychological and historical knowledge of a penetrating modern mind, humorist and mystic, which is drawn to the darker aspects of human nature but reacts with a fascinated sensitiveness to all life.

**Decline of Historical Novel:—**Historical Novel, after a glorious career in the Romantic and Victorian age, suffered a serious set back with the dawn of a new turbulent century. The reasons are obvious. The growing spirit of realism and intellectualism, which is the chief characteristic of the modern age, has proved detrimental to the growth of pure historical fiction. The utilitarian motives have so much pressed upon the social needs of men that the production like Waverley novels seem to be a far-off thinking. The rapid

development of psychology, especially of psycho-analysis, has also dealt a blow to the historical novel. The modern novelists have so much entangled themselves in exploring the dark regions of the subconscious and unconscious stratas of mind that the poetry of the past has lost its fascination for them. However, inspite of all this unhealthy climate, there are writers who have kept the torch of historical novel burning : Sir Arthur Quiller—Couch ('Hetly Westley' and the 'Splendid Sour'), Ford Madox Hueffor ('The Fifth Queen'), Miss Marjorie Bowen ('Black Magic'), Miss Phoebe Gay ('Vivandiere'), Jacob Wassermann ('The Triumph of Youth'), and Lion Feuchtwanger ('Jew Suss'). And in the midst of these smaller hills John Cowper Powys stands like the Mt. Everest. These are some of the novelists who have guarded the guttering flame of historical fiction and kept it from being quenched by growing realism, intellectualism, cynicism and psychological jugglery.

## Historical Novel

### A Brief Synopsis :

1. **Definition** :—A historical novelist reconstructs imaginatively the life of the past by mingling fact and fiction and selecting facts on artistic grounds. It is a novel of manners subordinating events and personages to an expression of the life of an epoch.

2. **Origins** :—Simultaneous advent of historians in the 19th century alongwith novelists, valuing common human beings as human beings, produced the historical novel.

3. **Precursors** :—(i) Gothic romances revelling in horrors but lacking in historical imagination (ii) Abbe Prevost's 'Romance of the 17th Century' (iii) 'Castle of Otranto' by Horace Walpole (iv) Mrs. Radcliffe's 'Mistries of Udolpho' contributing specially local scenery.

4. **Scott** :—The father of English historical novel combined adventure, realistic manners and romance; uses double plots from aristocracy and commonality and gives picturesque descriptions. Does not take liberty with historical facts as skilfully as Shakespeare and intermixes historical interest with the fictitious interest based

on imagination. The real value of his novel lies in the universality of characters. Wonderfully co-ordinated romance and realism. Reconstructs best the near past as 16th century in 'Monastery', 'The Abbot' and 'Kenilworth', 17th century in 'The Bride of Lammermoor', 'The Fortunes of Nigel' and 18th century in 'Guy Mannering', 'Old Mortality', 'Rob Roy', 'The Heart of Midlothian'. He made the dry bones of history live. Behind the pageant of history he tried to interpret a movement, expressive of a mortal destiny. Without attempting any psycho-analysis of characters or a scientific sifting of events, he only glamourised the past.

5. **Alexander Dumas** :—In his 'Three Musketeers' we have history completely polarised.

6. **Elizabeth Bray**—in her 'The Protestant' romanticised the persecutions of protestants under Queen Mary Tudor, and Horace Smith in his 'Brambletya House' portrayed cavalier vagabonds in the Commonwealth period. G. P. R James also wrote about 100 historical romances in which historical figures were minutely described.

7. **Bulwer Lytton** :—'Last Days of Pompeii' brought historical fiction to perfection. By reconstructing the history of the time completely unlike Scott, after a thorough study, he imaginatively realised the pre-eruption days of the decadent Pompeii, and then, without the aid of any historical characters, he introduced imaginary characters befitting the times.

8. **Thackeray's** 'Henry Esmond' evokes the age of Queen Anne. Unlike Scott he reproduced the very tone and temper of the age with minuteness and fidelity and made history the master of romance. Probing within he produced a novel of the soul.

9. **Charles Reade's** 'The Cloister and the Hearth' is a great historical novel presenting with realism and truth 15th century life in Holland, Germany and Italy. It portrays the general conflict between religion and family affection.

10. **Charles Kingsley's** 'Hypatia' has the sublime theme of a death struggle between the Greek and the Christian civilization in the 5th century. Incidentally he also reacts against the pro-Roman tendencies of the Oxford movement. His 'Westward Ho !' and 'Hereward' evoke the Elizabethan age.

11. **George Eliot's** 'Romola' evokes Renaissance life in 15th century Florence after laborious study; but overpowered by ethical

determinism, she fails to visualise the historical atmosphere of the age.

**12. John Cowper Powys's 'Owen Glendower'** is a unique specimen of modern historical fiction. 'Treating Owen, the hero, a Welsh prince of the 15th century, he has faithfully presented the man and the age with a vital complexity. He has exercised his psychological and historical knowledge in presenting both the inner and outer life of the prince.

**13. Decline :—**Under the influence of modern realism, intellectualism and psycho-analysis the historical novel declined, for the poetry of the past lost its charm.

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## 4. Victorian Novel

**The rise of the Novel**—The dawn of the 19th century witnessed spectacular advancement of industry and commerce. As a result of it the middle classes came into power and became the arbiter of literary tastes. Therefore, the age finds its most characteristic expression in novel which is the most democratic form of literature. Before the Victorian age the novel had made a considerable progress, but in the Victorian age for the first time it outshone other forms of literary expression. In Victorian age the novel occupies the same place which drama did in the age of Queen Elizabeth I.

**Early Victorian novelists versus later Victorian novelists**—The Victorian novelists can be divided in two groups—the early Victorian novelists and the later Victorian novelists. The novel, as it existed before George Eliot, was considered, broadly speaking, ‘a fictitious narrative in prose written with the chief aim of entertainment.’ After her the novel became serious and psychological in tone. Hence the novelists before her indentified themselves with their reading public and were its spokesmen. The later novelists, however, were working in some sense, against their age; they were critical, even hostile, to its dominant assumptions. Their relation to the reading public was nearer to that of the 20th century novelists than to the early Victorians.

**The limitations of early Victorian novelists**—Since the early Victorian novelists were governed by the same conception of novel and wrote with the same objective in view, certain generalizations hold good with all of them. They are common (perhaps with the only exception of Emile Bronte) in their weakness and common in their strength. Their first limitation is that they are unable to conceive the story as an organic whole of which every incident and character forms a contributory and integral part. There are many loose strands in their novels. Secondly, they miss much out of life. Victorian conception of decency prevented them from giving any detailed treatment of the animal side of human nature. Their range of characterization is also limited. The interest of their characters lies in their comic or picturesque idiosyncrasy of speech and manner rather than in their relation to any general problems or

interest of human nature. There are no Hamlets among them; no intellectuals, artists or statesmen. Due to the avoidance of those deeper issues of human life, they hardly arouse those profounder feelings to which the greatest art appeals.

**The merits of the early Victorian novelists**—These defects are more than counterbalanced by their extra-ordinary merits, merits all the more mazzling to us from the fact that they are so noticeably absent from the novels of our contemporaries. Since in writing novel their chief aim was to delight the public, all of them are perfect masters of the art of story-telling. They present a curious contrast with the modern novelists in many more respects. Modern novelists are all specialists, experts. The Victorian nevelists had to satisfy the different tastes of different people. So every one of them is Aldous Huxley, D. H. Lawrence, Galsworthy, all rolled into one. It accounts for the vast multitude of characters in their novels. Their novels are panormas of whole society. The Victorian novelists may miss the heights and depths, but they cast their net very wide. In this way their novels are the queer mixture of extraordinary defects and merits. Those who do not care for art as such will discover in them that satisfaction which all the conscientious craftsmanship and accurate observation and technical experiment of to-day can hardly ever provide.

**The Humanitarian group**—Dickens is the most popular of Victorian novelists. His plots abound in loose strands but he was the first genuine story-teller, a quality which endeared him to the public. The other cause of his popularity lies in the fact that he was not merely a good story-teller but a social reformer who, like most of the Victorian novelists, used fiction as a platform for his social appeals, and who proved to be that rare type of reformer who could moralise with a smile on his lips and mix his sermon powder in such excellent jam, that his contemporaries did not realise for a while that he was indoctrinating them for their good. He was the first great writer to write the humanitarian novel and thus he contributed a lot to that philanthropic movement which aimed at making the life of the nation sweeter and happier. In his boyhood days Dickens himself suffered from various difficulties and tortures, For six months he served in Warren's blacking factory. In the depths of Dickens's nature a split had occurred, and the vision of a world of grim, twisted shapes, deformed, exaggerated caricatures, a world flickering with horrid images, impressed itself indelibly upon the

soul of a child. It was through this window that he always saw the Victorian scene. But his sufferings did not make him a rebel against society. No ivory tower claimed him, and Dickens did not turn away from a system that seemed to crush all human aspiration towards goodness and beauty. Instead he set out to reform the system through pity and laughter, but the topical purpose effectively limited his powers as an artist.

'Pickwick' was an essay in pure humour, a series of entertaining episodes lightly strung together. In the novels that followed 'Pickwick' he took on the familiar role of the crusader. As a crusader for the oppressed, Dickens first attacked the stony heartedness of organized charity. In 'Oliver Twist' he showed that the Poor Law Reform Act had only strengthened institutionalism by giving authority to unkindness. In *Mr. Bumble* all selfish dispensers of public charity stand condemned, and in *Oliver Twist* their helpless victims find an eternal symbol. It gave a shock to the well-fed and complacent reading public. An even worse shock was to come later, in 'Bleak House', when young Jo, typifying the utterly destitute everywhere, dies of hunger. 'Nicholas Nickleby' exposed the goings-on behind the doors of private schools. Next came 'The Old Curiosity Shop', perhaps best remembered for the overstrained emotionalism of the death of Little Nell—the angel child, too good to live, a scene which provided contemporary reader, with one of the highlights of fiction, but which a less sentimental age has damned to perdition. A visit to America in 1842 resulted in bitter disappointment for Dickens. 'Martin Chuzzlewit' records his disillusionment. American scenes in it gave offence, but the book is memorable for its characters. Sarah Gamp ("He'd make a lovely corpse"), Tom Finch, the Franciscan Mark Tapley, and that prince of hypocrites Pecksniff, make the novel a favourite with readers. 'David Copperfield', which may be regarded as a veiled autobiography, depicts the evils of child labour and neglect of education. The novel is also famous for the gallery of memorable comic portraits, especially that of Mr. Creakle, Uriah Heep, Mr. and Mrs. Micawber. In 'Hard Times', a novel instinct with power, he returned to the attack on the industrial evils of his day. The target in 'Little Dorrit' is the unreformed civil service, with its nepotism and injustices. Here the dice are loaded against the Circumlocution Offices and the human Barnacles who make the system work but whose selfishness and indifference destroy the soul in the society they serve. In

'Great Expectations' the story of the benevolent convict, young Pip, the proud Estella and the tragically eccentric Miss Havisham is well told, while the description of the Great Salt Marsh where Pip first meets the convict creates an atmosphere of cold horror. 'Our Mutual Friend' is a mellow and charming book, noteworthy for the interesting character of the schoolmaster, Bradley Headstone, the first murderer in Dickens to exhibit any complexity of character.

Perhaps Dickens's major contribution to literature, that which gives him his rank among the giants, was his discovery of the new sources of humour. Both the strength and weakness of his humour and pathos lie in his hypersensitive imagination. He over states. As a character painter also his method is that of caricaturist who exaggerates some particular quality of his characters so much so that they become grotesque. If he tries to delineate a character in a simple straight-forward manner, he proves to be a failure. The world of his fantastic imagination lives in so far as it is a fantastic world. The world that he creates in his novels has that essential vitality of creative art which is independent of mere verisimilitude. It does not matter that his world is not life-like : it is alive:

Genius he had in plenty, but it was untutored, and the restless fertility in contriving situations and inventing characters was never pruned by concern for form. Dickens added little to the development of the novel as an art form; it remained in his hands what it had been in the eighteenth century, a picaresque tale with a moral bias or the happy blending of drama and narration. But in spite of all his defects, Dickens has always been a popular novelist. "Among the English novelists", says Prof. Cazamian, "Dickens is neither the most consummate artist, nor the finest psychologist, nor the most accomplished realist, nor the most seductive of tale-tellers, but he is probably the most national, the most typical, and the greatest of them all."

**Reade, Kingsley and Mrs. Gaskell**—The humanitarian note of Dickens was further advanced by Charles Reade and Charles Kingsley. They not only attacked injustice but proposed remedies. Artistically, Reade has the greater power to fuse his social purpose and dramatic imagination, and as a humanitarian force, though no more strenuous than Kingsley, he is more varied, more impressive, more poetic. No man without the poet's soul could have penned the 'Cloister and the Hearth'. There is the true Renaissance of



Wonder' in its pages. Another important name in connection with the humanitarian novel is that of Mrs. Gaskell. In her novels we come across with the economic and industrial problems. She did, in some ways, for north what Kingsley was doing for the south. His 'Cranford', often read and loved as a charming and idyllic period piece, shows the repercussions of Big Business on two small-town sisters.

**Decline of humanitarianism**—At the close of the Eighties the humanitarian note in fiction became much less pronounced. The astringent realism, that has proved one of the forces of the succeeding era, gave a less propagandist, a less sentimental flavour to the novel of social life and manners.

**The novel of Satire:—Thackeray**—Thackeray suffered in popularity against Dickens as Browning did against Tennyson. These two are opposed to each other in most things of importance. The world depicted by Thackeray is different from that depicted by Dickens. Even their reading public was different. Dickens wrote for the common men; he was the man of the street, raised to the power of genius; so he takes sides and exaggerates. Thackeray was a realist and a man of much wide culture. He had little patience with the idealization of the Romantic school and found that his proper orbit lay in observing life as it is and representing it with candour and precision.

Dickens's characters live by virtue of their individuality, while Thackeray's impress us by virtue of the characteristic they share with one another. Thackeray does not present types of human life as a whole; certain motives and qualities universally present in man stir his imagination. He shows a great insight in studying human nature; he had a marvellous ability of discerning and depicting even the slightest streaks of snobbery and egotism. A clear insight in human weakness shows Thackeray's powers of observation and not his creative imagination.

The world of Dickens is unlike the real world. Mr. Micawbre and Mr. Pecksniff are unlike anyone we ever met in real life. But the characters of Thackeray are like the people we have met and may meet in life. He had a genius not for recreating so much as for rearranging the facts of life. Thackeray's creative power shows itself not in transforming the facts he has observed about life: but in arranging them. "Dickens's imagination", says Lord David Cecil, "is a



distorting glass turning to grotesque comedy or grotesque terror the world that it reflects; Thackeray's is a kaleidoscope shaking the coloured fragments of his observation into a symmetrical order, round the centre of a common canon of conduct."

'Vanity Fair' is an authentic picture of the upper middle classes who lived in the big new Bloomsbury squares, presented with clear-sighted realism and sparkling irony. Society in the eighteen forties was becoming fluid owing to the influx of wealth. Everyone wanted to get in, but the only assured passports were birth and wealth. 'Vanity Fair' is the story of a woman who had neither. Instead, Becky Sharp had brilliant green eyes, a ruthless determination to get on in life, a hard calculating mind, no kindness or humour, but unfailing good temper. Infinitely more gifted than the fortunate ones around her, the poor pupil from Miss Pinkerton's Academy demanded her share of the prizes of life. Becky sharp was something new in fiction. Here was an adventuress with the world as her oyster, a study in instinctive trickery, inherent duplicity and the supple energy of the eternal feminine. Becky, by her marriage to Rawdon Crawley, scaled the social ladder and rose to dizzy heights of social distinction; but the ladder was a magic one and could withdraw itself at will. At the first breath of disapproval it vanished, for society extends little tolerance or protection to those whose right to its patronage does not rest on an accepted foundation.

Although Thackeray's books have different themes, yet in reality they are all about Vanity Fair and show different aspects of it—Vanity Fair as seen in the life of a young man in 'Pendennis'; Vanity Fair as seen in the life of family in the 'New Comes'; and Vanity Fair seen in the life of the past in 'Henry Esmond'; 'Henry Esmond' is a historical novel, and to some the best in the language. Written in a style of easy urbanity, it evokes the age of Queen Anne—the world of Swift, Steele, Harley and Bolingbroke, the world of dastardly Mohocks, the notorious Lord Mohun and his most distinguished victim, the Duke of Hamilton. The story, concerned with an eccentric Catholic family, loyal to the Stuarts, is presented against a contemporary background of political and religious bigotry.

Thackeray's great contribution to the English novel is that he used the novel to express a conscious and considered criticism of life as Tolstoy and Proust did in the late 19th century. Thackeray is the first great novelist of ideas. Fielding's ideas are given not only in the introduction to 'Tom Jones' but are pronounced in the novel

itself. Thackeray enlarges upon the tradition which Fielding had set in and the moderners have still enlarged over the ancestors.

**Thackeray's followers—Disraeli and Trollope**—Thackeray's disciple was Benjamin Disraeli, one of the most powerful personalities of mid Victorian age. He has given satirical pictures in his novels. His important works are 'Sybil', 'Tancred' and 'Coningsby' which show a humorous insight into the social and political life of his age.

Thackeray's most popular disciple is Trollope. As a novelist Trollope has every qualification save that of genius. He has a humour, a sense of tragedy, a nice instinct for characterization. However, his greatest merit is that he is a fine story-teller. His fame in his day was tremendous but now it has suffered a set back.

**Passions Spin the Plot—Bronte Sisters**—After Dickens, Bronte sisters are the most widely read of Victorian novelists. The range of Charlotte Bronte is confined to the inner life, the private passions. Her heroines do not try to disentangle the chaos of their consciousness, they do not analyse their motives or feelings at all. 'Jane Eyre', 'Villette', 'Shirley' and 'The Professor' are not exercises of mind but the cries of heart. The note of intimacy, of personal revelation is very much pronounced in her novels. The world she creates is the world of her own inner life; she is her own subject. Moreover, she revolutionized the conventional concept of heroine by showing that a plain and dawdy like Jane could attract as much interest as the most beautiful heroines of romance.

Emily Bronte's 'Wuthering Heights' is the most wonderful of Victorian novels. Shadowy, incoherent, remote from human experience, oppressive and terrible in its violent imagery, it is lit up and transfigured by a tragic splendour rarely surpassed in English fiction. The chief characters are scarcely human beings, they are the primal forces of nature, incarnated passions. It is an extraordinary book—Titanic in its fierce, indisciplined power, with a haunting beauty underlying all its horror, making us realise :

"Infinite Passions And the pain of finite hearts that yearn."

Against the urbanised landscape of Victorian fiction it looms up august and alien, like the only surviving monument of a vanished race.

**George Eliot**—To turn from Emily Bronte to George Eliot is to leave the wild stormy uplands, reverberant with thunder and full of menace under the flash of lightning, for the lecture room, gas-lit, a little stuffy, and with a marked preponderance of bald heads. The atmosphere unmistakably is that of horsehair, black satin and learned conversation. Yet George Eliot, too, is animated by passion; in her case an intellectual and moral passion that had its origin not in any truth seized by the imagination,, but determined by unaided human reason.

The material in her first important novel 'Adam Bede' was drawn from memories of her childhood, from the personalities and experiences that belonged to the world of English provincial towns fired by religious revivalism and the Methodist preachers. The story follows the moral pattern that characterizes all her novels. Hetty Sorrel, whose prettiness and the vanity that accompanies it cause her tragedy, is used to reveal a puritan disenchantment with beauty as a snare and delusion. She is contrasted with Dinah Morris, who represents the stern moral integrity that renounces self and devotes all the energy of youth and enthusiasm to a cause. Such conduct alone, we are made to feel, is praiseworthy. The contrast between the world's values and the inner reality forms the subject-matter of her next novel,, 'The Mill on the Floss.' In her next novel, 'Silas Marner', she had the congenial task of describing a character passing from a lower to a higher moral level and achieving happiness through love and sacrifice. In 'Romola' she turned to the Italian Renaissance. The background of the novel is Florence at the end of the fifteenth century. Romola, the daughter of an old blind scholar, is another of the noble-natured heroines born for disillusionment when they are lured by worldly values. A fine trilogy of novels that followed 'Romola' may be said to signalize the end of her literary career—'Felix Holt', 'Middlemarch' and 'Daniel Deronda'. 'Felix Holt', the only one of her novels to deal with British politics, is a study of political idealism. 'Daniel Deronda'—"the utterly tedious Deronda"—as he has been called, is a study in racial idealism. 'Middlemarch' includes the biographies of some fifty people and has as its central theme the tragic waste of a woman's idealism and energies in the stifling trivialities of provincial life. The tragedy of Dorothea Brooke, the heroine of the novel lies in her failure to find anyone great enough to use her devotion and enthusiasm.

George Eliot was the first great novelist to lay stress upon character rather than upon incident. She changed the whole conception of novel writing. She did not try to entertain her reading public; she was an intellectual. As she was an intellectual, she saw her characters as thinkers, as politicians, as immortal souls. Her wide intellectual interests did lead her to portray human life in those deeper, more general aspects that are omitted from the novels of Dickens and Thackeray. And this meant that novel ceased to be primarily an entertainment. Like the novel of today, it became a medium for the discussion of the serious problems and preoccupations of mature life.

Like other contemporaries, George Eliot did not begin with the personality that appeared to the outward world, but with psychological elements underlying that personality. All her serious characters are envisaged exclusively in their moral aspect. Her concentration on the moral side of the human nature is the chief source of her peculiar glory, kernel of her unique contribution. Her imagination is not the distorting glass like Dickens's, vitalising her figures by accentuating their personal idiosyncracies, nor it is, like Charlotte Brontë's, a painted window suffusing them with the colour of her own live temperament; it is an X-ray bringing them to life by the clearness with which she penetrates to the secret mainspring of their activities. She was a new force in the domain of English fiction. "She stands at the gateway between the old novel and the new; no unworthy heir of Dickens and Thackeray, no unworthy forerunner of Hardy and Henry James" (Lord David Cecil).

**Meredith**—George Eliot preserved some links with the past tradition of English novel, but Meredith was completely a pioneer seeking new paths and trying to blaze new trails. His novels carry no story interest whatsoever; the entire attention is focussed on the moving springs of human character.

The ground plan of Meredith's novels is to show human beings as victims of comedy. Meredith's conception of romantic comedy, a blending of the romance of the earth with an analysis of human failings, gave a new stamp to English novel. He was heightening the purpose of English novel but sacrificing its entertainment value. Meredith by temperament was not a good storyteller. He was a novelist of 'great scene'. The interest of his novels relax after the climax and great scene and we have the weak



endings of his novels. His mind was critical philosophical and poetical.

The 'Ordeal of Richard Feverel' tells the story of an impassioned first love. 'Evan Harrington', which followed in 1861, was autobiographical. Evan's father is a tailor of Lymport, and the novel is concerned with the attempt of Evan's sister, who has married a Portuguese nobleman, to launch her brother on 'high life' and conceal the undesirable connections of which she is ashamed. The central feature of 'Harry Richmond' is the romantic attachment of Harry to the Princess Ottillia and his father's manoeuvres to overcome the obstacles to this absurd match. 'Beauchamp's Career' is the study of a youngman's political idealism and his quixotic excesses both in the cause of humanity and the cause of love. In the full surge of triumphant creativity, Meredith next produced what must always be regarded as his masterpiece, 'The Egoist'. To the very last chapter the fortunes of war are undecided. Will Sir Willoughby be the victor in the long contested struggle for male domination or will Clara escape from the imminent and hated marriage? Superb displays of rapier-like wit enliven every page. The novel is a comedy of narrative in which the central figure is the egoist himself, Sir Willoughby Patterne, rich and handsome, with great position in the country but insufferably selfish and fabulously conceited.

To enjoy Meredith's rare gifts as a novelist requires a suppleness of mind, a richly sensuous appreciation of words, of their magic, their colour and manifold associations, a delight in lively wit and humorous observations of mankind. But above all he requires of his reader a passionate love of living. He himself overflowed with the sense of being alive. Brain and senses were intensely active; everything was experienced at white heat and all that he wrote was charged with radiance. He has no use for the sluggish, the flat and the insipid; he depicts character so ardently that where we are under his spell we feel its mystery and wonder; we find ourselves caught up in the vast glittering webs of his plots and know the exhilaration of unravelling them. About his characters J. B. Priestley says, "Either we see his people as little puppets illuminated by lightning flashes of wit or we are almost inside their mind, swayed hither and thither by their lightest emotions. Compared with the world of ordinary novelists his a world revealed to us



either by sudden glimpses through a camera or by X-ray but never by common sight." As a delineator of woman he stands alone among nineteenth-century novelists for the sheer poetic intensity with which he realized her infinite variety. It is truly said "the star of Meredith burns and is alive with constant fire". He is the Congreve of the novel.

Meredith may be described as the father and creator of the modern novel which interprets the world from inside. He is the first of those who developed English novel in a new direction and explored a new rich vein in fiction. The works of Henry James, James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolfe were the logical culmination of those pioneering efforts of Meredith to give to the English novel a new psychological depth and reach.

**Thomas Hardy**—Although Meredith invented a novel and realistic form and initiated changes in the structure of the novel, he was a typical Victorian in the mode of his thinking. The credit of effecting a revolution in the field of ideas was reserved for Hardy. The novel, before it could be completely modernised, had to look for the publication of the story of a new type of pure woman (Tess), and of a new type of a man of character (Henchard).

"But although", says Lord David Cecil, "intellectually Hardy was the man of future, aesthetically he was a man of the past." He has many points in common with the writers of Fielding and Scott school. He creates many improbable situations and introduces supernatural charms to aggravate the intensity of his tragic mould. His characters are stocky. The endings in his novels such as in 'The Return of the Native' or 'The Woodlanders' mark no distance travelled from the ancient method of writing.

Hardy was the singular combination of the poet and the realist. His poetry is chiefly revealed in his description and interpretation of nature. There is something almost uncanny in his exact knowledge of the obscure processes of nature. Hardy has not used nature merely as an embellishment but as a part of human life exerting a vital influence upon it. The human drama is played out in the awful presence of living Nature, and the spirit of Egdon Heath and Stonehenge seem to put forth their invisible hands to crush the writing mortals. In Hardy Nature has a personality of her own, and it is more often hostile than sympathetic. Hardy's name must for ever be associated with Wessex, a name now wholly

fictitious, but which his creative imagination has made so real that it is constantly and seriously spoken of as though it were English geography.

Hardy's sensitive and almost abnormally sympathetic mind was oppressed by the general tragedy of existence. From an early time he felt there was an obscure volition in the depths of things that curbed our individual destinies under a law greater than ourselves. Irrationally but characteristically Hardy saw a power behind the vast machine, but it was malignant. It was, as Schopenhauer had maintained, a blind force that cared nothing for the individual. In Hardy's novels human beings appear to be in the grip of a superior power; sometimes it is nature, indifferent to man, sometimes malignant chance, often it is the tragic determinism of human desires. Whether his creed is fatalism or determinism he is haunted by the vision of necessity. He grasps it grandly, and illustrates it with unwearied persistence.

Hardy's masterpieces are 'Far From the Madding Crowd', 'The Return of the Native', 'The Mayor of Casterbridge', 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' and 'Jude the Obscure'. 'Far From the Madding Crowd' is a study of a recurrent Hardy theme—the contrast between two types of love: the one selfish, violent and unscrupulous, but withal exercising a dangerous fascination, and the other patient, unselfish and devoted. The two loves are embodied in the characters of Sergeant Troy and Gabriel Oak. 'Return of the Native' shows Hardy's increasing tendency to despair. The story, which has the sombre heath as its background, is one of frustrated idealism and unhappy love. 'The Mayor of Casterbridge' is perhaps Hardy's finest novel. The tragic drama is woven out of six main strands, the lives of Michael Henchard, Susan Henchard, Elizabeth Jane, Richard Newson, Donald Farfrae and Lucetta. It is as organically complete as anything written for the Greek stage. Henchard, perhaps the greatest instance of masculine characterization in Hardy's fiction, possesses something of the titanic strength and folly of Lear, and the drama in which he figures moves forward with an inevitable and relentless power from the spectacular opening to the terrible nemesis which ushers in the end. In 'Tess' Hardy's outlook became even grimmer. All the forces of a merciless destiny were now ranged not against strong, obdurate nature that invited its doom, but against a woman made for love and happiness. So intent was Hardy on hounding Tess and providing life pitiless and

implacable that he overstepped the bounds of psychological realism. The President of the Immortals, in the Aeschylean phrase, might have finished his sport with Tess, but another victim was ready to be offered up in Jude Fawley, the pathetic hero of 'Jude the Obscure'. This is the story, in Hardy's own words, "of the war waged between the flesh and spirit." After its publication Hardy was so vehemently criticised that he wrote no more novels but turned to poetry and embodied his experience of human destiny in the epic drama 'The Dynasts'.

"Notwithstanding the predominance of pessimism in Hardy's philosophy, a pessimism that was part of the European literary heritage in the nineteenth century, his true note is a rich and noble paganism" (S. D. Neill). Hardy's understanding of the world, with all its merry humour and brave fronting to fate, leaves him rather resigned, uncomplaining, filled with pity for his fellows, but calm with the courage of those who have not fed themselves on illusory hopes. Life may be a tragedy with a few interludes. Yet the philosophy of the old Dorset seer is stern, not weeping.

With Hardy begins the modern novel in full form ; for while Meredith experimented upon and gave a new form to the novel, Hardy gave the subsequent age a set of new ideas and questions, which inspired a host of writers and story-tellers.

**Dawn of the new Century:**—Towards the end of the nineteenth century the novel was fast establishing itself as a literary monopoly. In the hands of the later Victorian novelists it was no longer merely a means of entertainment but came to be regarded as a serious form of art. But it was left for Henry James, R. L. Stevenson, George Moore and Joseph Conrad at the dawn of the new century to give to its composition the scrupulous literary care formerly given to poetry and the drama. They enlarged upon the tradition of the Victorian novelists and used the novel with a new deliberation, exploring its values and keenly relishing the possibilities its sensitive and flexible medium offered both for characterization and artistic form.

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## Victorian Novel

### A Brief Synopsis :

1. With the upsurge of the middle classes in the Victorian age the novel, as a democratic form outshone other forms.

2. **Early vs. later Victorians**—The earlier ones identified themselves with the reading public and wrote for entertainment, but the later ones, more serious, grew critical of the age.

3. **Early Victorian novelists** : (a) Demerits (i) Lack of organic unity in plot (ii) False sense of decency in avoiding the animal side of human nature. (iii) Characters display only idiosyncrasies of manner and no profound intellectual interest. (b) Merits (i) Masterly art of story telling for entertainment (ii) To satisfy different tastes they provide a vast multitude of characters.

4. **The Humanitarian group** :—Dickens : main characteristics (i) a genuine story-teller with loose plots (ii) attempts social reform through entertaining fiction. (iii) Personal hardships coloured his vision of deformed creatures in life. (iv) Social purpose weakened his art. His main works are 'Pickwick Papers', 'Oliver Twist', 'Bleak House', 'Nicholas Nickleby', 'Old Curiosity Shop', 'Martin Chuzzlewit', 'David Copperfield', 'Hard Times', 'Great Expectations' and 'Our Mutual Friend'.

5. The humanitarian note of Dickens was further advanced by Charles Reade, Charles Kingsley and Mrs. Gaskell.

6. **The novel of satire**—Thackeray :—Dickens and Thackeray contrasted (i) Dickens an idealist, Thackeray a realist (ii) Dickens's characters have their distinct individuality, whereas Thackeray's impress us by virtue of the general characteristics they share with one another. (iii) Dickens possessed great creative power, but Thackeray possessed a keen power of observation.

Thackeray's main works are 'Vanity Fair', 'Pendennis', 'Newcomes' and 'Henry Esmond'.

7. **Thackeray's followers**—Disraeli and Trollope.

8. **Passions spin the plot** : **Bronte sisters**—Charlotte Bronte's novels are cries of the heart—confined to inner life—the note of personal revelation. Emily Bronte's 'Wuthering Heights' is shadowy, incoherent and full of violent imagery.

9. **George Eliot** :—Her chief works are 'Adam Bede', 'The Mill on the Floss', 'Silas Marner' and 'Romola'. Her novels are characterised by the element of intellectual discussion and the

painting of characters exclusively in their moral aspect. She stands at the gateway between the old novel and the new.

**10. Meredith** :—His chief works are 'Ordeal of Richard Fernal', 'Beauchamp's Career', 'Harry Richmond' and 'The Egoist'. Chief characteristics (i) He shows human beings as victims of comedy (ii) a novelist of great scene (iii) His mind was critical, philosophical and poetical.

**11. Thomas Hardy** :—His main works are 'The Mayor of Casterbridge', 'The Return of the Native,' 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles and 'Jude the Obscure'. Chief characteristics— (i) stocky characters (ii) traditional plot (iii) tragic view of life (iv) a combination of the poet and the realist (v) a set of new ideas.

**12. Conclusion**—dawn of the new century.

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## **5. Self Expression in Fiction**

*Or*

### **The Autobiographical Novel**

"A novel", says Lord David Cecil, 'is a work of art in so far as it introduces us into a living world ; in some respects resembling the world we live in but with an individuality of its own. Now this world owes its character to the fact that it is begotten by the artist's creative faculty on his experience. His imaginations apprehends reality in such a way as to present us with a new vision of it. But in any artist only some aspects of his experience fertilize his imagination, strike sufficiently deep down into the fundamentals of his personality to kindle his creative spark. His achievement, therefore, is limited to the part of his work which deals with these aspects of his experience." The novelist brings forth his imagination to give a new form and shape to his experiences and his personal life which he holds dearer to his heart.

In order that a work of fiction may have a deep and abiding popularity, it is necessary that the novelist should introduce experiences which he might himself have undergone and present characters with whom he has been familiar in life. The reason why the characters and stories of Jane Austen and Dickens have won a permanent place in the heart of the readers is that these novelists personally lived and experienced the life they had depicted in their works. When they sought to delineate characters and to paint life unfamiliar to them, they stumbled and could not achieve distinction. When Jane Austen strove to portray high romance and Dickens high aristocratic life, they cut a sorry figure because they had little or no experience of such life and it could not kindle their creative spark.

A novelist cannot say, borrowing the language of Christopher Isherwood, "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording not thinking." This camera like attitude is not possible for a novelist. There is always something behind the story. A writer's attitude towards life born of his own experiences and beliefs is as much a part of his work as the story itself. It has to be admitted that a novel is composed of what an author has felt or

experienced. Imagination can do no more than help him to select and weld his impressions into novels and stories. Even Flaubert, the high priest of art for art's sake had to leave his "ivory tower" and come down in this world to experience personally the feelings and characters that he depicted in his immortal work 'Madam Bovary.' In the early stages of writing, 'Bovary' he wrote to one of his friends, "I have always forbidden myself to put anything of myself into my work," But the same Flaubert had to write at a later stage. "It is difficult to express well what one has never felt". He himself suffered the physical symptoms of arsenical poisoning when he was presenting the suicide of his heroine.

Coming to character portrayal, it can be asserted with the full confidence that the great source of character creation is novelist's own self. "Every writer", says Leslie Stephen, "consciously or unconsciously puts himself into his novels and exhibits his own character even more distinctly than that of his heroes.", Some form of self-projection or reincarnation must always take place in the fictional character. The writer living for the time in his characters divests himself of those parts of his own nature which are irrelevant and develops the relevant parts of his nature to more than their normal size—his more successful characters are portraits of potential selves, "All the characters that we create are but copies of ourselves" (Somerset Maugham). The novelist may have mentally to change his sex, age, social position and other accidents, and also develop to the full every suggestion of every vice or virtue he may possess. 'Know thyself' is the novelist's first maxim and the novelist with the widest range as a creator of character is he who contains within himself the greatest variety of potential selves.

**Dostoevsky**—Dostoevsky, the Russian novelist, was the first man to impart egotistic basis to fiction. Edward Hallet Carr who sees danger in seeking autobiographical material in professed works of fiction has to admit that, in the case of Dostoevsky, novel has been used to express the author's ideas or to resolve and soothe his personal dilemmas. The character of Marmeladov in 'Crime and Punishment' represents the author, particularly his weakness of morbid self-pity. Again, the famous correspondence between Aglaya and Nastasya Philippovna in the 'Idiot' was based upon an imagined correspondence between Dostoevsky's wife and mistress. Dostoevsky projects his own love of gambling in the hero of the 'Gambler', whose utterances are autobiographical in every detail. Again, the

theme of the 'Possessed' is avowedly subjective and Prof. Carr observes that "there is no reasonable doubt that Shatov is self-portrait, or it would be fairer to say a self-idealisation of the author." Middleton Murry has truly remarked that there is not even a single fact in his life "that cannot be deduced from his books; he lived in them and for them; they contain the anatomy of this tormented soul."

**Tolstoy**—Tolstoy used the novel openly to express his own inner conflicts and their torments, as well as to embody his prophylactic ideas which he endeavoured to practise. He used dramatisation, projection and all the other machinery of subjectivity in his work. Levin in 'Anna Karenina' and Nekhlyudov in 'Resurrection' are the outstanding examples of self portrait. Biryukov, his friend and biographer, went so far as to say that if there were "no facts to draw upon, we would, by arranging Tolstoy's works in chronological order, write his biography from them alone, for there is not a single work in which traces of autobiography are not to be found."

**Bunyan**—In the history of English novel Bunyan was the first writer to make fiction autobiographical. 'Grace Abounding' is the story of Bunyan's own conversion told with a compelling simplicity and sincerity. Even from his childhood Bunyan was tormented by strong fears of hell, and his visions were those of a mind darkened by the more mystical aspects of the Bible. All this moral anguish has been powerfully portrayed in 'Grace Abounding'. His 'Pilgrim's Progress' is the dramatisation of the inner experience of 'Grace Abounding'. The novel is, in fact, a spiritual autobiography of Bunyan. The story of how Christian leaves his doomed city at the bidding of Evangelist to seek by the path of Righteousness the Celestial City, is Bunyan's own story in search of salvation. Christian is captured by Giant Despair, imprisoned in Doubting Castle, falls by the Slough of Despond and is forced to fight with the monster Apollyon. All these are allegorical representations of the different moods and states of mind, the temptations and trials through which Bunyan himself passed. The slough of Despond is nothing but Bunyan's own sinful life given to false swearing. The fight with Apollyon is a testimony of Bunyan's military career and Christian's arrest at Vanity Fair and the Dungeon in which he was kept signifies the Bedford gaol in which Bunyan was locked up for twelve years. Christian's discourse with the judges at Vanity Fair is Bunyan's own defence given for the charge of Episcopacy. The

entire discourse on conversion in the novel is the story of Bunyan's own conversion to the love of Christ and Puritanism. 'Pilgrim's Progress' is nothing more than the spiritual history of its author cast in the form of a novel. "Every step", says a critic "in Christian's journey was first trodden by Bunyan himself."

**Richardson**—Autobiographical touches can be discovered in the novels of Richardson. "It is clear" says S. D. Neil, "that Richardson's extra-ordinary insight into the contradictory emotions of the female heart was gained from actual experience and these provided the psychological material for his *Pamela* and *Clarissa*." In his boyhood Richardson used to write letters on behalf of the ladies to their lovers. Hence when he wrote novels he employed this epistolary style. His characters are as fond of writing letters as is their creator. Richardson's idealised picture of womanhood is presented in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, and Sir Charles Grandison is an epitome of all the manly virtues that Richardson himself cultivated in life.

**Fielding**—Fielding's personal life and views are presented in his novels. He had been the life long enemy of Walpole, the Prime Minister, and his antipathy for Walpole has been presented furtively through the life story of 'Jonathan Wild'. In 'Tom Jones' there are many incidents and characters which are based upon Fielding's personal experience. The society painted in the novel is the society of the period immediately after the second Jacobite Rebellion, while the country was still convulsed by that romantic upheaval. Partridge is a foolish Jacobite; troops are constantly on the move; the heroine Sophia, fleeing from her father, is actually taken for Jenny Cameron, Prince Charlie's mistress. Fielding put a considerable part of himself in 'Amelia'. The picture of Amelia is really the picture of his own wife, whom he adored and who died recently. Further he presents the cruelty, squalor and disease that he personally saw; and the picture of corrupt laws of court, half-read judges, incompetent agents is a realistic picture drawn from his own experience of law courts as a justice of peace.

**Goldsmith**—Goldsmith's 'Vicar of Wakefield' has got a powerful egotistical basis. The honest Vicar who always believed in the doctrine of monogamy is the idealised picture of Goldsmith's father. Patient in adversity, humble when fortune smiles, incapable of wise action, always hospitable, the Vicar is always ready to forgive the sinner while reproving the sin. When Dr. Primrose in



pursuit of his daughter Olivia fell ill and found shelter in an ale house, he was unable to pay the bill of the inn. A kind-hearted book-seller of London paid the bill on his behalf and saved him from the worst consequences. This incident is purely autobiographical. The book-seller referred to is no one else than John Newbery who kindly published several works of Goldsmith. Further, the opinions expressed by Dr. Primrose in the novel about the revived interest in Elizabethan dramatists are exactly those of Goldsmith who wished the people of his times to take interest in Dryden and Rowe rather than cast longing lingering look behind on Elizabethan dramatists who were ill-suited to the age of classicism.

**Jane Austen**—The world of Jane Austen's novels is strictly limited to her own experience. She not only lived a quiet, sheltered existence but she was also curiously immune from the great movements of her time. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars swept by her without comment. In her world, the extremes of wealth and poverty were alike unknown. Three or four families, belonging to the country gentry of the professional middle classes, would form their own social circle, rigorously controlled by the laws of good taste. "The highlights of such a life were little visits, morning calls, weddings, shopping expeditions, or the quizzings of new arrivals. The acme of excitement was a ball, and the most appalling social gaffe and elopement. All these go to make up the plots of Jane Austen's novels" (S. D. Neill). Her novels are rich in presentation of elopements, search for matches, ball dances, parties and convivial meetings. The themes and characters of her novels are entirely based on her personal experience. And the secret of her success lies in the fact that for the presentation of experiences and characters she wisely limited herself within her narrow range of experience—She never left her "small square, two inches, of ivory."

**Dickens**—One of the greatest exponents of autobiographical fiction is Charles Dickens. 'David Copperfield', the most admired of his novels, is his veiled autobiography. Dickens was conscious of this and when he finished the novel he admitted that "he was in danger of wearying the reader with personal confidences and private emotions." The pen which wrote 'David Copperfield' was dipped in Dickens' own blood. "Like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child and his name is David Copperfield." The love incidents first with Dora and later with Agnes, represent



the two phases of the author's passion, the real idealised because it was a failure, and the ideal sentimentalised because it was never consummated. In the character of Micawber, the happy-go-lucky fellow Dickens outlines his father. His being sent out at twelve to work at Warren's blacking factory at Hungerford Stairs, nearing Charing Cross, is referred to in the second chapter in 'David Copperfield' where David is shown as washing bottles and pasting labels on them. Dickens worked at the blacking factory for six months, and then was taken away because his father had quarrelled with the manager. But his mother tried to patch up the quarrel so that he could return to his job. This gave him the feeling that he was no longer loved or wanted. He never forgot, and never forgave; and he put his mother in 'Nicholas Nickleby' as the exquisitely ridiculous Mrs. Nickleby. This blacking factory episode explains why we so often find at the centre of his novels the figure of the lost, persecuted, or helpless child. Oliver Twist, Little Nell, David, Paul Dombey, Pip and their near relations Smike and Joe. His early knowledge of the low life of London supplied material for 'Oliver Twist', and his school days gave him material for 'Nicholas Nickleby'. The novels of Dickens are "a more intimate revelation than Forester's or any other biographer's of the trials and experiences that formed the character, kindled the human sympathies, and trained the outer and inner eye of the potential novelist."

**George Eliot:**—George Eliot is another example of subjective novelist. The material in her first important novel, 'Adam Bede', was drawn from memories of her childhood, from the personalities and experiences that belonged to the world of the English provincial towns fired by religious revivalism and the Methodist preachers. The plot is founded on a story told to George Eliot by her aunt, Elizabeth Evans, a Methodist preacher and the original of the Dinah Morris of the novel, of a confession of child-murder, made to her by a girl in prison. 'The Mill on the Floss' portrays her brother Isac and herself in the characters of Tom and Maggie Tulliver. Tom is a prosaic youth, narrow of imaginations and intellect, animated by conscious rectitude of purpose and a disposition to exercise control over others. Maggie is a far nobler type, highly strung and intelligent, of intense sensibility and possessing artistic and poetic tastes. In fact all her heroines are representations of the different shades of her own life. "All George Eliot's heroines—Maggie Tulliver, Esther Lyon, Dorothea Brooke, Gwendolen Harleth and Romola—go

through the difficulties and the agonies and the struggles that had befallen to her own lot.' (S. D. Neill)

**Conrad** :—Joseph Conrad, the sea novelist, continuously dramatises himself in the concept of an imaginative hero who is moved to the kind of action which Conrad desired but failed to achieve except in art. "It is impossible to think of Conrad as novelist apart 'rom his devotion to the sea, for in that intimate love lay the secret of his view of life." (A. S. Collins). His personal experiences and the philosophy resulting from them form the warp and woof of his novels. In 'Lord Jim' we can have a vivid picture of Conrad himself, and his love for the sea-life. 'The Nigger of the Narcissus' is a description of the voyage from Bombay to London in a sailing-boat across the Indian Ocean, round the Cape of Good Hope and so northwards to England. Much of the book is autobiographical, for Conrad did make such a voyage, and the ship in which he made was called the Narcissus.

**H. G Wells**:—The habit of self-revelation is very much pronounced in the novels of H. G. Wells, the prophet-novelist. As Dickens, who was Wells's favourite novelist, did in 'David Copperfield', Wells used the background of his early life to make such novels as 'The History of Mr. Polly', 'Love and Mr. Lewisham' and 'Kipps'. Later he gave a full and direct account of his beginnings and of his reaction to his environment in his 'Experiment in Autobiography'. As Dickens felt keenly the neglect and incompetence of his father which put him as a small boy in a blacking factory, so Wells grew up to a contemptuous awareness of the muddle and inefficiency, of the stuffy stupidity and convention, which characterised the whole of his environment, whether at home or at school. After a brief schooling Wells was never tired of satirising, the kind of school where unintelligent teachers mistaught a futile syllabus in dreary building ; at fourteen he became, like Polly, an assistant in a draper's shop. From this he escaped to be a pupil—teacher in a country school, like Mr. Lewisham, and like him too made his way to the Science College at South Kensington. When, with a mind luminous with thronging ideas and a brave vision of Utopian possibilities, he became a novelist, the world of his boyhood remained vivid in his memory to provide a solid background. That world gave his mind its first problems, and in many of his novels it is the medium of his criticism of life.

**D. H. Lawrence:**—The tendency of seeking self expression in fiction is no where more prominent than in D. H. Lawrence. He is an unabashed subjectiviser and he largely drew on his own experiences and observations. In 'Sons and Lovers' Lawrence never lost his grip on himself. Always so intensely subjective that time and again his themes and characters can be seen clearly in terms of himself, in this novel Lawrence, from the vantagepoint of twenty-eight years, surveyed his childhood, the loves of his early manhood and his relationship with his mother. By the time the novel was finished he had broken almost completely with his early life. She, whom in the novel he called Miriam, saw him no more after he had shown her that part of the manuscript in which she appeared and would not alter it. In April 1912 he had met Frieda, whom he was soon to marry. Above all his mother, the dominating figure of the novel, had died. One chapter of his life had been closed. Once past 'Sons and Lovers', Lawrence let his soul in turmoil fight for truth in his fictional imaginings. His new life with Frieda was both ecstasy and bitterness, alternations of feeling to which he was always liable. When the characters in his novels quarrel with fury and violence, it is no more than what Lawrence did with his wife and his friends. 'The Rainbow' was in many ways the product of his early married life. In 'Women in Love' he projected with apparently little exaggeration the queer intensity of his relations with Middleton Murry, swinging between an attraction which he wanted mystically to consecrate by a rite of blood-sharing and an equally strong repulsion. Sex, the relation between men and women, is the main theme of his novels. His preoccupation with sexuality, reaching its frankest expression in 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' was so intense that it raised unprofitable speculations as to whether he was himself sexually impotent and as to the effect on his sexual views of his early worship of his mother. Ultimately he was a soul in rebellion against the machine age. Horrified by what the intellect was doing to humanity, he turned from the brain to blood. His reaction against the materialism of the machine age, against the intellectual and scientific bias of the time, against the unnaturalness of the personal and social life in modern conditions, soon cried aloud in novel after novel.

Self seeking or self revelations in fiction has always been recognized as a form of art in which success depends on the richness of experience. The reader, on his own part, is not so much influenced by the story, or the narrative, as by the motives which impelled the

author to self-expression. In fact, it is subjective rather than objective fiction that has commanded greater appreciation in the present day world where people are interested in studying the inner conflicts and motives of the characters than in more objective representation of adventures. The reader has begun to feel that the real elements of any work of fiction are the elements of the author's personality ; since his personages are personifications of the author's various impulses and emotions.

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## **The Autobiographical Novel**

### **A Brief Synopsis :**

1. In order that a work of fiction may have a deep and abiding popularity it is necessary that the novelist should introduce experiences which he might himself have undergone and present characters with whom he has been familiar in life. Author's attitude towards life born of his own experiences and beliefs is as much a part of his work as the story itself. The great source of character creation is the novelist's own self.

2. The novels of Dostoevsky are the anatomy of his tormented soul. Tolstoy, another Russian novelist, used the novel openly to express his own inner conflicts and their torments, as well as to embody his prophetic ideas.

3. In the history of English novel Bunyan was the first writer to make fiction autobiographical.

4. Autobiographical touches can be discovered in the novels of Richardson. Fielding's personal life and views are presented in his novels.

5. Goldsmith's 'Vicar of Wakefield' has got a powerful egotistical basis.

6. The world of Jane Austen's novels is strictly limited to her own experiences.

7. Dickens is one of the greatest exponent of autobiographical fiction. 'David Copperfield' is a veiled autobiography.

8. All George Eliot's heroines go through the difficulties and the agonies and the struggles that had befallen to her own lot.

9. In 'Lord Jim' we can have a vivid picture of Conrad himself and his love of sea life.

10. The habit of self-revelation is also very much pronounced in the novels of H. G. Wells.

11. D. H. Lawrence is an unabashed subjectiviser and he largely drew on his own experience and observation.

12. Subjective fiction has always commanded great appreciation.

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# **Literary Essays**

## **SEC. 3**

# **POETRY**



## 1. SPENSER—"The Poet's Poet"

(Charles Lamb)

**Nucleus of all poetic excellences and inspiration to poets :—**

In the nineteenth century that discriminating critic, Charles Lamb acclaimed Spenser as "The Poet's poet." By ascribing this pride of place to Spenser in the hierarchy of English poets, the prince of essayists paid a well-deserved tribute to the poetic genius of Spenser and the incalculable service he rendered to English poetry. The true poetic faculty is so abundantly and predominately present in Spenser that he proved a nucleus of all poetic excellences to be imitated and followed by a host of poets who came in his wake.

**Poet of poets and not of ordinary men :—**

Firstly, Spenser can be regarded as the poet's poet in the narrow Renaissance sense in which he may be deemed as the poet not of the common man but only of scholars and poets well versed in classical lore and humanistic studies. During the Renaissance, poetry of the type that Spenser wrote could really be understood and enjoyed only by those who were at home with classical writers and authors of the Renaissance. One who really seeks to appreciate Spenser shall be required to have thorough knowledge of

(1) The pastoral tradition of Virgil.

(2) The philosophical tradition of Plato and Aristotle.

(3) The romantic and moral tradition of Ariosto and Tasso.

Spenser's poetry is grounded in the aforesaid traditions of the great masters of the past and the present and a complete understanding of it depends upon a good deal of acquaintance with all of them. Since only scholars and poets had that necessary equipment to appreciate Spenser and the common man had not, Spenser has been rightly called the poet of poets and not of ordinary man.

**His exalted notions of poet's vocation :—**

But it never was the intention of Charles Lamb to use the epithet "The poet's poet" in the above-mentioned limited sense. The famous critic had several other qualities and contributions of Spenser in view before he gave him that privileged place among the sons of English muse. Spenser is recognized as the poet's poet, because

it was Spenser and not his illustrious predecessor Chaucer who gave to poetry and poets a place nearer to God, the great Maker. He had intense faith in the supreme value of poet's work and believed the poet as the chosen agent of God. He held that poetry was the gift of God bestowed in His mysterious grace upon a few favoured mortals. Poetry, then, was a high calling reserved for the few. The poet was responsible to the Giver that his talent was properly cultivated and worthily employed. In return for faithful service the poet was granted a measure of permanence which is in God alone. The following famous lines of Spenser enshrine poet's faith in the nobility of poet's vocation and the immortality of poetry—

“For deeds doe die however noble donne,  
And thoughts of men doe as themselves decay;  
But wise words taught in numbers for to rune,  
Recorded by the Muses live for aye,  
Ne may with storming showers be washt away.  
No bitter breatling windes with harm ful blast.  
Nor age, nor envy shall them ever waste.”

It was Spenser's greatness that he looked upon the poet as a man charged with a mission to work for the elevation and redemption of mankind. He believed that poetry was noble and necessary part of the complete and well-ordered life, and that the ideal it should teach was one of strenuous effort towards human perfection. Thus in giving a higher conception of poetry and in stating that poetry is immortal like the Almighty God. Spenser did something which his English predecessors had not done. This exalted notion of the function of poetry and poet's vocation makes Spenser the poet's poet.

### **His combination of passion for beauty with moral idealism :**

Divergent and conflicting opinions have always been held about the function of literature. Moralists have demanded that it should be an instrument of moral edification. On the other hand the champions of the theory of 'art for art's sake' have considered the poet as a ministering angel of joy and delight. It is to the credit of Spenser that he harmonised both the views. To a profound moral tone he added the graces and charms of beauty, loveliness, decoration and picturesqueness, so that those who are interested in getting lessons of morality and virtue can find them as profusely in Spenser, as those who are after the gratification of the physical senses. Spenser beautifully blended the message of

Renaissance and the Reformation in his poetry. He came to be regarded as the poet for artists because of his insistence on beauty, richness, pageants and exuberance, as well as "Our sage and serious poet Spenser, whom I dare be known a better teacher than Scotus and Aquinas" because of his insistence on the cultivation of virtue and moral principles of life. By combining a passionate quest for beauty with strenuous moral idealism Spenser's poetry is a supreme example of the function and nature of all true poetry and justifies his claim as the poet's poet.

**His services for the elevation of English poetry :—**

Spenser is considered the poet's poet because he set about to perform that great work for the glorification and elevation of English poetry which no one had done before Chaucer, no doubt, had written poetry of a high order, but in spite of his best services to English poetry, it could not rival the poetry of great European masters. It was Spenser who accomplished this thing for English Poetry. "He", says Renwick, "set out to endow England with poetry great in kind, in style and in thought, in order to show the world that modern England was capable of poetry as great as that of any other age and country, and that she had her share of poetic power, of art and learning." In order to accomplish this great task he set out achieving those excellences which characterized the works of Virgil, Catullus, Petrarch, Ariosto, Tasso, Marot and Ronsard. He studied the works of these masters so that he might become acquainted with their shortcomings and excellences, and while composing his own verse transcend them and beat them hollow in their own fields. He took material from Virgil, Ariosto, Tasso and others without the least hesitation in order to chasten his art. His aim was not to imitate them, but to prove that England could meet these great masters on their own grounds. "Certain things were held to make great poetry. England had to accomplish these things in order to take her place of credit in the eyes of the world. Spenser took this tremendous undertaking to accomplish them for her in order to prove himself a poet, worth the name. Besides, Spenser had to begin with the foundations, to make language and style and verse a new, to reconcile the native taste and forms with the style and forms of classical art, To control the violent spirit of the new age and direct it into channels of art, was of course, a herculean task before him. He laid these foundations, however, well and truly for all the succeeding generations of the English poets." He



gave to English poetry the best of European poetry. He outdid Ariosto and Tasso and imbibed the spirit of Plato and Aristotle in his 'Faerie Queen' and the 'Fow Hymns'. He rivalled Petrarch in sonneteering and vied with Theocritus, Bion and Virgil in pastoralism. For this work of reorienting English poetry and placing it on a level with European poetry Spenser has been rightly placed on such a high pedestal among the English poets.

### **His contribution to English versification :—**

Spenser entered the poetic arena at a time when ever since the death of Chaucer conditions in English versification and diction had become very chaotic. It was Spenser's great achievement to have improved and enriched English diction, style and versification. Spenser's mixture of the old English words with classical syntax produced something new for English poetry. He enriched the English language by incorporating in it words of foreign origin and by coining new words. He realised that for the purpose of great English poetry, there was need of a new language which could be made only by a poet. "He," says Renwick, "treated the English language as if it belonged to him and not he to it." He altered words, made one word do the duty of another, interchanged actives and passives, transferred epithets from their proper subjects and gave them any shape that the case may demand. Spenser's verbal melody and music based on the use of onomatopoeic words, proper employment of vowels and consonants and alliteration, is something unique in poetry. "With Spenser", observes Lowell, "the cold obstruction of two centuries thaws, and the stream of speech, once more let loose, seeks out its old windings of overflows musically in unpractised channels. The service which Spenser did to our literature by this exquisite sense of harmony is incalculable. "However, Spenser's greatest contribution to English versification consists in Spenserian stanza. He experimented with the quantitative system of the classics, the syllabic system of the French, and the system of Chaucer until he evolved something of his own in the form of Spenserian stanza. This stanza has firmly established itself as a metre of all kinds of narrative or reflective poetry. On account of its grace and voluptuous turn of rhythm the Spenserian stanza is admirably suited to the pictorial as well as the musical faculty of a poet. "The Spenserian stanza," says Davis, "that he invented for a unique occasion as the medium for expressing things unattempted either before or since, passed forth with into the

common heritage of all verse forms the most purely English by nature and descent." It is, therefore, on account of incalculable service rendered by him to English versification and diction that he has been given the credit of being the poet's poet.

**A fountain head of inspiration to the poets of all ages :—**

Spenser has been called the poet's poet because of the fascination and influence he exercised on every generation of English poets. Spenser has coached more poets and more eminent ones than any other writer of English verse. In his own age he was hailed as the prince of poets. Poets like Lodge, Daniel and Drayton paid their tribute to the new master and called him "learned, revered and excellent." Shakespeare in the 'Passionate Pilgrim' speaks of Spenser as :—

"Spenser to me, whose deep conceit, is such,  
As passing all conceit, needs no defence.  
Thou lov't to hear the sweet melodious sound,  
That Pheobus' lute, the queen of music makes."

Hence, in reference to the poets of his age, he well deserved to the poets of his age, he well deserved to be called the prince of poets in his time.'

In the seventeenth century this eulogy was further extended by calling him the poet's poet or the inspirer of the great poet Milton. Milton himself called Spenser as his poetical father, and Dryden writing in his preface to the 'Fables' calls Milton as the poetical son of Spenser. This indebtedness of Milton to Spenser can be viewed in manifold ways. Very early in his life, Milton thought of writing his great masterpiece on the Arthurian legend celebrated by Spenser in his 'Faerie Queen', though, later on, he gave up that theme for his 'Paradise Lost'—. Moreover the influence of Spenser's epic is visible on Paradise Lost—in his insistence on virtue and morality, his reference to the various knights of chivalry and romance, and in his use of gorgeous epic similes. Milton's earlier works like 'L' Allegro', 'If Penseroso' and 'Comus' echo not only Spenser's emphasis on virtue and purity but also rainbow-coloured imagination of Spenser revelling in gorgeous descriptions of natural sights and scenes. Like Spenser, Milton also blended his passionate quest for beauty with religious fervour and moral idealism.

Spenser was a source of inspiration even for the neo-classical poets. Spenser's genius was essentially romantic while the temper

of the eighteenth century England was neo-classic. Despite all this change in tone and taste, the appreciation of Spenser remained undiminished. Dryden tells us that Spenser had been his master in English. Even Alexander Pope was never tired of reading Spenser assiduously. Pope says, "There is something in Spenser that pleases one as strongly in one's old age as it did in one's youth." And the credit of Gray's being a poet goes to Spenser, because he became a poet by reading Spenser.

Spenser's poetry exercised a special fascination over the romantic poets. The Romantic Revival was based on the reawakening of imagination and an intensification of sensibility, qualities which were so remarkable in the poetic genius of Spenser. Hence there started a school of conscious and unconscious imitators of Spenser. There are those who imitated Spenser both in matter and manner. The Spenserian stanza was particularly the object of their adoration, imitation and experimentation. Thompson in his 'Castle of Idolence' and Shenston in his 'School Mistress' imitated both the matter and manner of Spenser. Wordsworth in his poem 'Guilt and Sorrow' imitated Spenser as a narrative poet. Shelley in his 'Revolt of Islam' imitated the romantic allegory of Spenser and in his famous pastoral elegy 'Adonais' the technique of Spenser for pastoral poetry. Likewise Byron in his 'Child Harold' not only imitated the Spenserian stanza but also adopted the mock heroic style more or less like that of Spenser. However, it was Keats who showed the most pronounced influence of Spenser. Keat's high sensuousness and his cult of beauty are exactly in Spenserian fashion. His pictorial power rivals, and at time, outshines that of Spenser. His insistence on the revival of mediaevalism is also a Spenserian note. He also adopted the Spenserian stanza. It may be said that his poem 'The love of St. Agnes' is the most Spenserian both in matter and manner.

In the Victorian age it was Tennyson who imitated Spenser. Like 'Faerie Queen' he divided his 'Idylls of King' into twelve parts each based on the Arthurian legend. Of course, he adopted the blank verse and not the Spenserian stanza as his poetic medium. All the same, his graphic pictures have a Spenserian note about them. The poets of the Pre-Raphaelite group, Morris, Rossetti and Swinburne were devout disciples of Spenser. They inherited from Spenser pictorial suggestiveness, revival of medievalism harmony of language and opulence of details.

### **The Ruler of English Parnassus :—**

Wherever and whenever poetry seeks nourishment from high flown imagination, intense emotion and graphic power of visualization, Spenser's influence will be evident. In his poetry we have the best and finest qualities that are generally associated with good and great poetry, and in a way he is the fountain head of all those poetic excellences which are spread over in the works of subsequent poets. He rendered incalculable service to English poetry and proved a torch-bearer to the poets in every age. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that he has been placed at the top of English Parnassus and has been given the privileged title of "The poet's poet."

### **A BRIEF SYNOPSIS**

1. By describing Spenser as "The Poet's Poet" Charles Lamb paid a well-deserved tribute to the poetic genius of Spenser and the incalculable service he rendered to English poetry.

2. Firstly, Spenser can be regarded as the poet's poet in the narrow Renaissance sense in which he may be deemed as the poet not of the common man but of scholars and poets.

3. Spenser was the first English poet who gave to poetry and poets a place nearer to God. Spenser's exalted notion of the function of poetry and poet's vocation makes him the poet's poet.

4. By combining a passionate quest for beauty with strenuous moral idealism Spenser's poetry is a supreme example of the function and nature of all true poetry and justifies his claim as the poet's poet.

5. Spenser set about to perform the great work for the elevation and glorification of English poetry. He gave to English poetry the best of European poetry.

6. Again, it is on account of incalculable service rendered by him to English versification and diction that he has been given the pride of place among the poets.

7. Spenser has been called the poet's poet because of the fascination and influence he exercised on every generation of English poets—The Elizabethans, the neo-classical, the Romantics and the Victorians.

8. Spenser's poetry has the finest qualities generally associated with great and good poetry and he proved a torch-bearer to the poets in every age. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that he has been placed at the top of English Parnassus.



## 2. MILTON—The Belated Elizabethan

### Or

### MILTON—"At once the Child of Renaissance and Reformation"

Mark Pattison in a very pregnant phrase has designated Milton as "at once a child of Renaissance and Reformation." Along among poets he endeavoured to blend the spirit of Renaissance and Reformation. Spenser had attempted it superficially, writing moral and religious legends beneath the pictures which he painted like a great sensuous artist, but his juxtaposition of the two elements did but make their incompatibility more glaring. Milton was the first to conceive from the outset of his career, a work which combined the perfection of ancient art and the intimate moral ardour of the Bible. He had experienced within his own heart the conflict of the opposing forces—paganism and Christianity, nature and religion—and he composed their differences in his own way. The proportion in which the two elements are presented in his work varies with his years, but from the beginning his powerful will mingles them harmoniously. "No other English poet", says Prof. Legouis, "was at once so profoundly religious and so much an artist."

The spirit of the Renaissance may be identified with Humanism—*viz.* "a due respect for human nature in all its fullness (therefore including all our natural desires and instincts)." The spirit of Renaissance includes all that Hellenism stands for *viz.* glorification of beauty, music, art, love and exuberance of life. The spirit of Reformation represents religious zeal, moral earnestness and love of virtue. It is identified with Hebraism that stands for spiritual discipline, moral austerity and other worldly outlook. The writers working under the influence of the Reformation championed theological dogmas rather than humanistic culture. They were puritans to whom religion and morality were the pre-eminent concerns and they looked askance at learning of classical masters and the adorers of beauty and art.

Milton's childhood was spent in a time when the forces of the Renaissance were in the ascendancy and his old age marked the consummation of the narrow puritan ideals. In Milton's poetry there is presence of the qualities represented by both the Renaissance and the Reformation. He is both a belated Elizabethan of the Renaissance and a fervent disciple of the Reformation.



Qualities that were dear to the Elizabethans are given as exuberant an expression by Milton as the qualities which the Puritans later on upheld. Thus in Milton we have the traces of both the Elizabethans and the Puritans. "His childhood", says Walter Raleigh, "was spent in the very twilight of the Elizabethan age; it was greatly fortunate for him, and for us, that he caught the afterglow of the sunset upon his face." Milton who had seen "the afterglow of the sunset" had felt the power of Shakespeare and Spenser and he presented the glow of the old masters of the Renaissance period with as great an enthusiasm as the ideals set forth in the Bible.

Milton's first substantial poem was the 'Ode on the Nativity', which, though written on a Biblical subject, glows with imagination and is full of pagan imagery. It shows a unique combination of romantic movement with classical strength. The Hellenic or the Renaissance element is paramount in the two succeeding poems—'L' Allegro and 'II Penseroso'. These two poems of the Hertford period are in the grip of the Renaissance. In 'L' Allegro' there are echoes of romance, the description of dancing and rustic sports, the visit to the playhouse, the references to "Jonson's learned sock" and sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child" warbling "his native wood notes wild." There is no hint here of the fanaticism that would shut the theatres, pull down the May poles on the village greens, and turn "Merrie England" into "Psalm-singing" England. In 'II Penseroso', the poet dwells upon his love of pagan learning and in imagination he haunts the cathedral and enjoys the beauty of its dim aisles and the sounds of the organ.

In 'Comus' we find the two strains—love of beauty and love of virtue—very harmoniously combined. The ideal of chastity and triumph of virtue over vice form the theme of this masque. Though the theme of 'Comus' is ethical, it has all that glow of imagination, splendour of style, and musical verse; which constitute the glory of Elizabethan poetry. The songs in 'Comus' recall the Elizabethan lyricists. Lines like

"Love—darting eyes and tresses like the morn"

are in the manner of Shakespeare's early style. In 'Comus', the puritan seriousness and the triumph of virtue are for the first time combined with the Renaissance love for music, gorgeousness, beauty and decoration. "Comus" reveals the growing conflict between the two ideals—the ideal of Renaissance and the ideal of

Puritanism. What we have called the Hellenic and Hebraic elements in his work are now clearly beginning to change their relative proportions for while the vehicle adopted shows the persistence of Hellenism, the matter and purpose exhibit the growth of his Hebraism."

'Lycidas' is an elegy in the classical pastoral tradition. "Milton outdistances all previous English elegies almost as easily as in 'Comus' he had outdistanced all the earlier masques. It stands with the great passage of 'Paradise Lost' as the most consummate blending of scholarship and poetry and Milton and, therefore, in English. All pastoral poetry is in it. Theocritus in Virgil. Spenser and Sidney and Drummond, with memories, too of Ovid and Shakespeare and the Bible and yet it is pure and undiluted Milton with the signet of his peculiar mind and temper stamped on its every phrase." Except for the Phoebus and St. Peter passages, 'Lycidas' recalls the Elizabethan elegies in tone and expression; the pagan imagery is diffused throughout the poem, mingled, (though Johnson complains, incongruously) with Christian imagery. While the use of pagan imagery and the elaborate description of flowers shows Milton as a classical humanist, the introduction of St. Peter denouncing the corruptions of the clergy, reveals the growing puritanism of Milton. 'Lycidas', in fact, is the first poem of Milton; where the puritan element shows itself more pronounced than the Elizabethan.

Milton's great epic, 'Paradise Lost', is the product of the Reformation and the Renaissance. Here Milton employs the art and learning of the Renaissance in the service of religion and moral truths which had now become the dominant factors in his life. The theme of 'Paradise Lost' is based on the Bible. Milton had abandoned the subject of King Arthur and his Round Table, which had attracted him for some time. The Puritan and republican Milton could not possibly make the story of a legendary king the theme of his great epic. His epic was to be a Christian epic and the story of the Fall of Man, as told in the Bible, was to be its theme, and for the Puritan Milton every incident connected with the Fall of Man, as described in the Bible, was historically and literary true. He had implicit faith in the authenticity of the Bible. To the Puritan Milton, again, God's ways are always just; therefore, he emphatically declared, that his aim was to assert "eternal providence" and justify the ways of God to man. Thus

the theme or 'Paradise Lost' is directly traceable to the Puritan element in Milton.

But the treatment of the Biblical theme is thoroughly classical. He employs the form of the classical epic and brings in the pagan deities as fallen angels. He presses to the service of the puritan epic the machinery of the Renaissance. The love of romance and chivalry comes out in the epic, and these qualities are essentially the Renaissance qualities. Satan represents Milton's Renaissance love for adventures, freedom and enterprise. Milton had inherited from Renaissance the spirit of freedom and love for adventure. He had acclaimed and advocated the rebellion against the prelates and even the king, and celebrated the glories of regicide. "The pride and indomitable courage of the revolted angel rekindled the emotion of the intensest hours of his life. Devoutly but mechanically he paid lip-service to the duty of obedience, but in his heart he was chanting a hymn to freedom and rebellion" (*Legouis*):—

"What though the field be lost?  
All is not lost; the unconquerable will,  
And study of revenge; immortal hate,  
And courage never to submit or yield;  
And what is else not to be overcome."

'Paradise Lost' is the work of a Renaissance humanist. "It comes rather from the humanist side of Milton's mind. His subject is not the Eternal and inscrutable Decrees of God and the salvation of man through the righteousness of Christ. It is the warfare of reason and passion in Man whom God has created free; the forfeiture of freedom through man's surrender to passion (as in Adam's case), Adam's too great love for his tempted and erring wife; the restoration of that freedom through the victory over temptation of the Perfect Man, the son of God, but not himself God." (*Greirson*). In 'Paradise Lost' the humanist Milton has pointed out that God possesses a foreknowledge of man's destiny but he leaves man's will free. When Satan wanted to fly out of the gate of hell, Christ asked his Father if he would not like to stop Satan from working havoc on Adam and Eve. God answered that since he had granted freedom of will to all. His creatures, Satan included, He could not violate His own law by stopping Satan from his nefarious purpose. In the story of Adam there was conflict between pre-destination and free will. Without entering into theological controversy Milton pointed out that man

was created free, and therefore, was solely responsible for his fall. This Renaissance ideal of man's free will makes the Epic a work of Humanist culture rather than a work of pure puritanism.

The two poems that followed—'Paradise Regained' and 'Samson Agonistes'—are completely dominated by the spirit of Puritanism. 'Paradise Regained', though an epic, is not in the classical tradition, for it is not based upon action, but upon the spiritual conflict between good and evil. There is hardly any action in 'Paradise Regained'; the spiritual conflict between Christ and Satan is shown by means of arguments, in which Satan is completely defeated. 'Samson Agonistes' is the last work of Milton. It is only classical in form, but in its theme, outlook and temper, it is Hebraic. There is nothing in 'Samson Agonistes' of that poetic opulence and splendour that had characterised 'Comus'; it is Hebraic in its simplicity and severity. 'Samson Agonistes' presents, as 'Comus' does, a sorry of temptation, to which virtue is exposed, but what a difference! It appears as though the poet had completely shed all his Renaissance equipment, and reduced himself to an austere Puritan.

Milton produced most of his work at a time when the forces of Renaissance had not altogether lost their potency and when a synthesis of the two great movements of the age—Renaissance and Reformation—was still possible. No doubt he lacked the universal sympathy and breadth of vision which Shakespeare possessed. But he had nothing in him of the morbid scrupulosity of the fanatic puritans. His true kinship, therefore, is not with Bunyan or Baxter, the strictly Puritan authors, but with his immediate Elizabethan predecessors—Shakespeare and Spenser—whose spiritual aspirations were united with the human passion for truth and beauty and who trusted the imagination as an important medium of attaining their ideal. He, in fact, was a belated Elizabethan. Like the great Elizabethan writers he succeeded in combining a passionate love of beauty with religious fervour and strenuous moral idealism, and he was the last poet in England to achieve this, as after him the gulf between the two movements became too wide to be bridged again.

#### A BRIEF SYNOPSIS

1. Milton has been rightly called as "at once the child of Renaissance and Reformation". His work combined the perfection of ancient art and the intimate moral ardour of the Bible.



2. The spirit of Renaissance includes all that Hellenism stands for *viz.* glorification of beauty, music, art, love and exuberance of life. The spirit of Reformation or Hebraism stands for religious zeal, moral austerity, spiritual discipline and other-worldly outlook.

3. Milton is both a belated Elizabethan of the Renaissance and a fervent disciple of the Reformation.

4. His earlier poem like 'Ode on the Nativity', 'I' 'Allegro' and II 'Penseroso' show the predominance of the Renaissance spirit.

5. In 'Comus' the two strains—love of beauty and love of virtue—are very harmoniously combined.

6. 'Lycidas', and elegy in the classical pastoral tradition, is the first poem where the Puritan element shows itself more pronounced than the Elizabethan.

7. In his great epic 'Paradise Lost' Milton employs the art and learning of the Renaissance in the service of religion and moral truths. Love of romance and chivalry comes out in the epic. Renaissance love for adventure, daring, freedom and free-will is clearly reflected in it.

8. The last works—'Paradise Regained' and 'Samson Agonistes'—are completely dominated by Puritanism.

9. Though he lacked the universal sympathy which Shakespeare possessed, he was above the morbid of scrupulosity fanatic puritans. His true kinship is not, in fact, with strictly puritan authors but with his immediate Elizabethan predecessors.

### 3. The Metaphysical School of English Poetry

In Europe the metaphysical poetry dates back from Dante and Lucritius. They were the two real exponents of the complete sense of it, of "the speculation and doctrines concerned with matters beyond possible human experience." But the English metaphysical poetry begins with Donne, and is a new thing. Much toil has gone to endeavour to extract its source from the poems of Marino in Italy and Gongora in Spain, his two illustrious contemporaries. Donne, of course, has in common with Marino the lavish use of metaphors, hyperboles and verbal virtuosity, and with Gongora metaphysical elaboration and frequent mythological allusions. But



Donne's poetry viewed minutely is very distinct from theirs. Marino and Gongora refined style and manner while Donne refined thought.

**The circumstances leading to the birth of metaphysical trend**—Revival of the medieval scholastics under the impact of Renaissance the rise of modern astronomy and other sciences through the revolutionary Copernican theory and the efforts of Kepler and Galilio, the 'dissociation of the sensibility' of the late Elizabethan age are some of the influences which are responsible for the birth of the metaphysical trend in poetry.

**What is metaphysicalism?**—It is an interesting thing to note that the term metaphysical, here is used, not in its old denotational sense, but has been consecrated by use for the poetry of Donne and his followers, since Dryden named it and Dr. Johnson confirmed it. Mrs. Bennett remarks that "it is not altogether a happy term" because the word metaphysics gives the impression that speculations of philosophy, discussions regarding the nature of the universe, or other abstractions have been made the subject matter of poetry. But, in actuality, it is some thing quite different—unique.

"The word 'metaphysical' refers to style rather than to subject matter," says Mrs. Bennett, Metaphysical poetry is the impression of a new attitude, new mode of application of a theme and art, and an exquisite blend of thinking with experience by the poets. It is an awakening from the stupor caused by the magic of the gaudy and sweet phraseology of the Elizabethans, a breakaway from the hackneyed expression particularly from the conventionalized Italianate lollipop phrasing of the sentiment of love, and lastly a revolt against the Petrarchian tradition the fruit of which had become over-ripe and was approaching putrescence.

**Donne**—With his mind full of the medieval learning and an interest into the modern psychology, along with a heart, swelling with finer emotions Donne came to rescue the Elizabethan lyric from its mellowed music and its conventional diction. For this, as Dryden says, he "affects metaphysics." His poetry never forsakes emotion, but endeavours to render them with a fresh charm by supplementing them with their intellectual equivalents. Donne ratiocinated the lyric. This is his novel method, his principal technique by the virtue of which he is a 'metaphysical'. Donne's poems always open with the experience of an expression or an emotion but they

soon give way to a dialectic which emerges and feeds upon the previous experience but always launches free excursions into the world of thought and reflection. 'The Sunne Rising' opens with—

'Busie old foole, unruly sunne  
Why dost thou thus

Though windows and through curtains call on us?" and the experience seeks a set of its intellectual correlatives by a process of constant amalgamation of feelings and ideas and results into a universal song. Donne's beginnings are always strange expression of sensibilities

When by thy scorne, o murderesse, I am dead."

('The Apparition')

Or

"Twice or thrice had I loved thee,  
Before I knew thy face or name."

('Valediction')

But soon in all these poems and in many others the intellectual jugglery overtakes these fanciful sweet lines and his analytic mind engages attention. It becomes a double blessing for him. It saves the poem from becoming an expression of morbid, personal idiosyncracies and also impersonalizes it. Thus his pieces possess the charm of the personal and the impersonal, the particular and the general, the individual and the universal at one and the same time.

Apart from it. Donne's is a characteristic technique of expression which becomes a 'God's way' for his imitators. Use of far-fetched analogies, seeking, 'occult resemblances' bathing the whole expression with ingenious shower of wits and conceits, quick and abrupt transitions of thought, his habit of yoking the most heterogeneous ideas together by violence are some of the means he employs to effect a disconcerting and disintegrating sensation. Donne is most subtle. He procures very surprising effects by connecting the trivial with the sublime, the jest with the earnest, and the mean with the lofty.

His poetical images arise from a perceived likeness between dissimilar things. Lovers he compares to the two legs of a compass or when he sees a cloud—

"Sometimes we see a cloud that's dragonish  
A vapour sometimes like a bear or loin."

Ruggedness and harshness are the two effects which his poetry skims of. He sub-ordinated music to meaning. Donne introduced

bold and free innovations in the rhymed verse to endow it with the spontaneity and ease of the blank verse. His diction is colloquial and common place, always borrowing from the vocabulary of philosophy and science.

**George Herbert** :—He was the saint of the Metaphysical school. He follows the logical pattern of his master's poems and like him coins images appealing to the mind. But we find a naive simplicity, in his poems, which obviously is the result of his less varied and less complex experiences.

Donne had sung of both the love of woman and the love of God, but Herbert shuts himself from the love of woman and devotes his art singularly to the enchantment of Divine song. 'Affliction', 'Paradise', 'Dulness', 'Death', all of these and nearly all the rest are inspired by his love for God. In 'Dulness' he betrays his preference.

"Thou art my loveliness, my life, my light  
Beautie alone to me ;  
Thy bloody death and undeserved makes thee  
Pure red and white."

In 'Affliction' he expresses in a passionate paradox his unwavering and unflinching devotion to his God Love :

"Ah my deare God ! though I am clean forgot  
Let me not love thee, if I love thee not."

Herbert's poems always ring with emotional notes. His method is not of Donne to divorce them just when they are born and to intellectualise but he simply plants emotions into the soil of thought. Thought and feeling in him are thus fused together making a homogeneous whole of a singularly ardent nature.

**Vaughan**—Nearest to Herbert's influence wrote Henry Vaughan. To Herbert's influence are due the metaphysical conceits as in the image "stars shut up shops" when the poet is describing dawn. Moreover, several of Vaughan's poems, like Herbert's, are devoted to church festivals. Again, he sometimes imitates Herbert's whimsicality and homeliness.

He is at his best when he deals with the themes of childhood, and of communion with nature and with eternity. His 'Retreat' regrets the loss of childhood and anticipates Wordsworth's famous 'Ode on Immortality'—

"Happy those early days when I  
Shined in my angle infancy."

Like Wordsworth, too, he feels nature's infinite beauty and sees nature as symbolical of God.

**Richard Crashaw**—The last important poet of the sacred metaphysicals is Crashaw. He diverges from Donne's tradition and accepts models from Gongora and Marino. "It is after their fashion rather than Donne's", says Legouis, "that he is metaphysical." Attracted by their glowing qualities, he fell under the spell of colour and melody. Whereas Donne and his imitators tend to elaborate an idea, Crashaw loves to elaborate sensations. Sensationalism is an outstanding characteristic of his poetry. 'On the Wounds of Our Crucified Lord' and 'Hymn to St. Teresa' are characteristic specimens of his habit of mixing physical torture with sensual love. In the later piece he sings—

"O how oft shall thou complain  
Of a sweet and subtle pain,  
Of intolerable love  
Of a death in which who dyes  
Loves his death and dyes again."

What an expression of luxurious pain ! What a joyfully sad paradox !

**Herrick**—Robert Herrick's 'Harvest Home' and 'Corinna's Going a Maying' are the most charming songs, Spenserian in beauty, tone and bearing also the ingenious fancy of the metaphysical poets. The later one is honoured as one of the classics of English songs on May. Moreover, habit of perceiving likeness between dissimilar things is characteristically one of the Donne's school—

"One asked me where the Roses grow ?  
I bade him not goe seek,  
But forthwith bade my Julia show  
A bud in either cheek."

The comparison is on scant similarity if at all any.

**Abraham Cowley**—In Cowley the metaphysical strain had become feeble. He was learned and ingenious of fancy, but his work suffered from a lack of deep feeling, and in him the use of the metaphysical wit and conceit deteriorated into mere ingenuity and mannerism. His intellectualism linked him also with the neo-classicists. He was on the way to "the age of understanding".

**Andrew Marvel**—Marvel's poems have been described as the finest flower of serious and secular metaphysical verse, Marvel's

work as the subtlety of wit, the passionate argument and the learned imagery of the metaphysicals, combined with the clarity and control of the classical followers of Jonson and the gracefulness of the cavaliers. We give below the well-known lines from 'To His Coy Mistress' which illustrate clearly the metaphysical blend of passion and fantastic conceit, handled by Marvel with his distinctive control and poise.

"But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near :  
And yonder all be before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.  
Thy beauty shall no more be found;  
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
My echoing song : then worms shall try  
That long preserved virginity."

**Decline of Metaphysical trend**—About the middle of the 17th century a change came over the English poetic temperament. The metaphysical wave had exhausted itself, and had left literary standards and values confused. The metaphysical had misused the Elizabethan ideal of liberty. It necessitated the growing realisation of clarity and control in poetry. Ben Jonson with his prophetic vision had advocated literary order and discipline in place of lawless impulse and unbridled fancy. His example was ignored for a time, but it was effective later when metaphysical method, in its decay began to produce more weeds than flowers. Cowley and Marvel had realised the importance of poise and control in their verse. But Edmund Waller and Sir John Denham were the real-pioneers of the new movement. They led the reaction against metaphysical excesses by writing charming verse on the classical model.

**Revival of Metaphysicalism**—After the I World War metaphysical method again came into vogue. Consciousness of waste and futility of war, and the desolation and hopelessness resulting from it once more brought God in purview. A sincere quest for positive faith emerged, and we have a marked tendency with the opening of the thirties. Religious poetry came to be written under the influence of the 17th century metaphysical poets. What gave a further impetus to the writing of religious poetry was the popularity of Hopkins after being resurrected by Bridges in 1819. The poetry of Hopkins had qualities which particularly appealed to the



post-war world; it revealed a sense of spiritual tension and frustration; it combined a powerful intellect with a strong sensuousness; it possessed a bold originality of technique. The poetry of Hopkins is completely on the lines of the old metaphysicals; the same devotional grace; the same technique of expression and the same use of Donne's breaking up lines, suddenly indicating a pause. 'The Caged Skylark' is a typically metaphysical piece. In the thirties the poetry of Hopkins exercised immense influence on English poets. The greatness of his poetry can be judged from the impact it made upon poet who did not share the religion which inspired and governed all that Hopkins wrote.

Mr. Eliot himself now turned his face away from the faithlessness of the 'Waste Land' and 'Hollow man' and in 'Ash Wednesday, sought refuge in the Anglo-catholic doctrines of faith. Since then, religion has become his voice and he has been considered by some as the lost leader. Eliot's poems are in a complete sense metaphysical. Eliot's art embraces Donne's technique of the juxtaposition of the levity with the seriousness, his method of presenting things by contrast, his use of wits and conceits as well as his free manipulation into metre and rhyme scheme to suit the melody and meaning of the piece. 'Ash Wednesday' and poems composed after it are marked clearly by his Anglo-Catholic inclination. 'Burnt Norton', 'East Coker', 'The Dry Salvages', and the 'Little Gidding' each of these of the 'Four Quartets' reveals symbolically this highest faith and is a finely universalised song of enchantment of the highest Entity in a sober and philosophical tone.

**Future of Metaphysical Poetry**—It will be interesting here to mention that the future of metaphysical poetry is bright. Prof. Ransom, an eminent critic of to-day, meditating upon the nature of true poetry, has vindicated that the metaphysical poetry is alone the true poetry. In his treatise he cancels pure physical poetry as an impossibility aiming at the 'thinginess' and also the 'Platonic poetry' which is a false poetry dealing with ideals and ideas alone. He prefers metaphysical poetry not because it represents the middle way between the two, but because it produces a beautiful blend of the two.

### A BRIEF SYNOPSIS

1. In Europe the metaphysical poetry dates back from Dante and Lucretius. But the English metaphysical poetry begins with Donne.

2. There were many circumstances which led to the birth of metaphysical trend.

3. The word metaphysical refers to style rather than to subject-matter.

4. Donne revolted against the mellowed music and conventional diction of Elizabethan lyric. He ratiocinated and lyric. His poems are characterized by a blending of feeling and ideas, far-fetched analogies, wits and conceits, abrupt transition of thought, the juxtaposition of the trivial and the sublime and free innovations in rhyme and metre.

5. The poems of George Herbert has a naive simplicity. Nearly all his poems are inspired by his devout faith in God.

6. Another sacred metaphysical poet is Crashaw. He shows a deep influence of Gongora and Marino. Sensationalism is an outstanding characteristic of his poetry.

7. Robert Herrick also shows the ingenious fancy of the metaphysical poets.

8. In Cowley metaphysical strain is enfeebled.

9. Marvel's work has passion, the subtlety of wit and the learned imagery of the metaphysicals, combined with the clarity and control of the classicists.

10. About the middle of the seventeenth century there came a reaction against metaphysical excesses and lawlessness.

11. After the I World War there was a revival of metaphysical trend.

12. The future of metaphysical poetry is bright.

#### 4. Victorian Poetry

**General Features**—Three factors are of great importance in the Victorian age : first, the steady advance of democratic ideals, second, the industrial advancement and third, the growth of the scientific spirit. The Victorian age was never a sedate and peaceful period. It was a dynamic period with restless and bewildering forces struggling towards a synthesis.

The Revolution left a legacy for the Victorians. The English character has traditionally been conservative. The Revolution.

held up before the people the ideals which could no longer be ignored. Hence the Victorians were confronted with the problem of reconciling order with progress, the urge to change with the desire to preserve, the new political concepts with the gradual evolutionary process of the growth of British Constitution. The task was not an easy one. The principle of liberty had led to massacre, bloodshed and Reign of Terror in France. Fraternity had vanished into Bonapartist imperialism. The task was to reconcile the idea of fraternity with the universal law of competition and equality with the diversities of individual genius. The problem of reconciliation was further complicated by the emergence of competitive commerce and industry, democracy, and evolutionary science. As a result of the publication of Darwin's 'Origin of Species' (1859) there arose in the mind of sensitive men a conflict between religion and science, between blind faith and the spirit of enquiry. It was fashionable in the age to have "honest doubts" and to exercise a spirit of compromise in their solution. This spirit of compromise manifests itself not only in the solution of religious problems but in every walk of life. The Victorian age was thus an age of compromise.

The Victorian age is remarkable for its extreme deference to conventions, many of which appear quite ridiculous to us. The new morality was a natural reaction against the grossness of the earlier Regency and was encouraged by the respectability and decorum that reigned at the Victorian court. The poetry of the most representative poet, Tennyson, clearly reflects this new morality. The priggishly complacent Sir Galahad and King Arthur were just the characters that could be admired in the Victorian age. The Victorian age was an age of prudishness and of respect for convention and Authority. The Victorians strictly adhered to authority meant State and established Law; in the field of government it meant aristocracy; in religion it was represented by the Established Church; in the domestic sphere it meant the supremacy of Man over Woman.

The Victorian age makes a partial reversion to the spirit of the eighteenth century. After the rule of emotions, dreams and tumults of the soul, there comes a time when the need of an order born of reason begins to manifest. The keynote of this new era, therefore, will be a pronounced call for rationality in all things. Once again the desire for truth will take first place among the

motives of creation; stress will be laid on realism, and the claims of a careful style will be more emphasized. In spite of its partial reversion to the spirit of the eighteenth century, the Victorian age may also be considered as the continuation of the age of the Romantic Revival. Although the representative poet of the age, Tennyson, is almost 'classical' in the elegance of his diction and the polish of his verse, the revolt against the Tennysonian school with its velvety diction and smooth self-complacency is apparent everywhere in Victorian poetry. Mathew Arnold, in spite of his great admiration for the ancients and the classical strain in his poetry, is in many ways a Romantic poet, particularly in the note of pensive melancholy which may be heard so often in his verses. Browning is thoroughly unconventional and has most of the Romantic traits. The poetry of the Pre-Raphaelites too is in revolt to the Victorian traditions for they proclaimed no morality but that of the artist's regard for his art. The Pre-Raphaelites were belated Romantics, with their desire for emotion, their cult of beauty and dreaming tendency, weaving the main theme of vision round the subtle blending of imagination and sensibility.

**Tennyson**—If the poets of the Victorian age had to be grouped round two central figures, one of these would be Tennyson and the other Browning. Tennyson is by far the most representative poet of his age. While Romanticism had tended to lay stress on feelings, Tennyson deliberately emphasized the importance of discipline in form. He is an indefatigable, conscientious and meticulous artist. After the lapse of two centuries, he again experiences, next to an age of self-outpouring and passion, the need for balance, for a fine and apt compactness of phrase, which poets like Waller and Dryden had felt. "As the heir of romantic tradition, he completes and corrects it by incorporating into it the essential tenets of classicism" (Cazamian). He combines the profusion and variety of the Romantics with the finish and discipline of the Classicists.

If Tennyson's artistic compromise with tradition was a happy one, his spiritual compromise with Victorianism proved a disaster. In reflecting the restless spirit of his age he is as remarkable as was Pope in voicing the artificiality of the early eighteenth century. He tried to become the prophet of his age. For nearly half a century Tennyson was not only a man a poet; he was a voice, the voice of whole people, expressing in exquisite melody their



doubt and their faith, their griefs and their triumphs. In 'Princess' he expresses a typical Victorian conception of domestic love. The best things in this book are the beautiful lyrics like 'Tears Idle Tears' and 'The Splendour Falls.' Three years later 'In Memoriam' was published which is an elegy inspired by the death of Tennyson's friend, Arthur Henry Hallam. 'In Memoriam' is his best claim to be regarded as a "thinker in verse" and the poem reveals the conflict between faith and doubt which was troubling the mind not of Tennyson alone but many men of his time. Even then he is hopeful :—

"All will be well though faith and form  
May be sundered in the night of fear;  
Well roars the storm for those that hear  
A deeper voice across the storm."

'Maud' which was published in 1855 is a protest against contemporary utilitarianism. The poem is melodramatic and lacks strength. It pleases us by the very traits which surprised the contemporaries of Tennyson : the more vigorous touches, the study of a morbid psychology and the boldness of lyricism. The lyrics like these,

"Oh, that it were possible  
After long grief and pain  
To see the arms of my true love  
Round me once again."

can only be compared to such lyrics like "Break, Break, Break" and "Tears Idle Tears". As for the 'Idylls of the King' they only remain a typical product of the Victorian age. Tennyson borrows his matter from Malory but is careful to purge him of everything that might shock Victorian sensibilities. Though the knights and ladies in the 'Idylls' masquerade in mediæval armour, they are in fact typically Victorian men and women. Tennyson's later poems contain perhaps a harsher note but include such fine things as 'Rizpah', 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' and 'The Brook'. During the last years of his life he was also attracted towards drama but could not achieve distinction therein.

In spite of his many great qualifications, Tennyson is not now regarded as one of the greatest poets. The causes of his popularity in his own age are also the causes of the reaction against him in ours. He was a typical Victorian and was looked upon by his own age as a veritable oracle. The inevitable reaction to this hero-worship was bound to set in; his philosophical ideas now appear



cheap and pallid, his narrow patriotism is now believed to be "not enough", his mellifluous verses contain little to satisfy the modern disillusioned age. His art, though pure and delicate, sometimes smacks of artificiality; the superiority of ornamental effects, of a highly finished form, as against the originality of thought, introduce the subtle aroma of decadence into his poetry. Therefore, when in the dawn of the twentieth century there was a reaction against Victorianism, Tennyson's reputation waned. But now his star is again in the ascendent. And a time will come when impartial criticism will judge him not as the great poet, but as the most admirable artist of the nineteenth century in England, inferior only in this respect to what Keats gave promise of and at rare moments came to achieve.

**Browning** :—Never perhaps have two great writers of the same age differed so widely as did Tennyson and Browning. Tennyson is a Victorian and is thoroughly representative of his age. On the other hand, Browning is in many respects a modern poet; his profundity of thought, his carelessness of form and style, his psychological insight into character and his cosmopolitanism are all modern elements.

Browning's first poem 'Pauline' (1833), is crude and immature. 'Paracelsus' (1835) is incomparably greater than 'Pauline' and is a poem dealing with the medieval scholar and physician who was full of inordinate ambitions and desires and whose aim was the attainment of universal knowledge. The poem, in spite of its four interlocutors, has affinity with the dramatic monologue. 'Sordello' is so full of obscure details and recondite allusions, that it established Browning's reputation for obscurity. 'Pippa Passes', published one year after 'Sordello,' is not a regular drama but a dramatic poem which defies unconscious influence. Browning, for some years after this, concentrated his attention on the writing of dramas, although, in spite of fine psychological penetration into character, he failed to produce even one really great drama. The chief cause of his failure in his dramatic efforts was that he could not co-ordinate action with character portrayal. Among his dramatic works may be mentioned 'Strafford', 'King Victor and king Charles', 'A Blot in the 'Scutcheon'; 'Colombe's Birthday' and 'A Soul's Tragedy'. Browning had by now become convinced that his forte was the dramatic monologue, and his 'Men and Women' (1855) consists of dramatic monologues, often of great power and penetration.

'Dramatic Personal' (1864) gives us more monologues. In 1868-9 appeared 'The Ring and the Book', Brownings's longest, and in many ways his greatest work. The poem deals with the story of the murder of a young wife, Pompilia, by her worthless husband, Count Guido. The story is told by nine different persons in twelve books; this naturally entails a certain amount of repetition. but on the strength of this work Browning too can claim the title of the "subtle—souled psychologist". After 'The Ring and the Book' his fertility was undiminished but his poetical powers were weakening. The more attractive of the later works are 'Fifine at the Fair', 'Dramatic Idylls', 'Parleying with Certain People' and 'Asolando'.

Browning's aim was "soul dissection", he had an analytic mind which revelled in search of the causes and sources of human emotion. But since he was less able to present character in action on the painted scene, he gave up writing plays in favour of the dramatic monologue. For a man with the dramatic genius of Browning's type dramatic monologue was a godsend. In the dramatic monologue, Browning selects the most significant moment in the life of a person, the most significant for the revelation of his character, and then allows, him to speak for himself and in the act to reveal the half-hidden crevices of his mind and soul. Among the best of these monologues may be mentioned 'Bishop Blougram's Apology', 'Abt Volger', 'Fra Lippo Lippi', 'Andrea del Sarto', 'The Last Ride Together' and 'The Grammarian's Funeral'.

Both in subject matter and style Browning displays profound originality. Tennyson's poetry is marked by smoothness, finish and flowery graces of style; Browning's has strength, vigour and ruggedness. Browning's art consisted chiefly in the use of the grotesque. Just as he had a fondness for strange and unusual actions and queer characters, he had also a liking for queer metres. He frequently indulges in grotesque rhymes and mercilessly flouts the rules of grammar and syntax. The technicalities of his style and the subtlety of his mind generally make him unintelligible to the common reader.

Throughout his career Browning held up the steady light of a hopeful and optimistic concept of life before the doubt-racked Victorians. In this respect also he presents a contrast to Tennyson. Tennyson's is the attitude of faith, it has been said, just because it

is also that of doubt. He says we trust that "somehow good will be the final goal of ill", he does not see how good can be the goal of ill, but he trusts. On the other hand, Browning's is the attitude of philosophy : he faces the difficulty and reasons it out. His optimism is not shallow and facile but it is based on experience. He clearly recognizes the presence of 'evil and of human misery but their presence does not shake his confidence in the value of life which "means intensely and means good". Browning believed in the theory of evolution, and held that life is a persistent struggle towards an ideal never completely attained, never even to be completely attained. Love, according to him, is the all-pervading principle of life and "God ! Thou art love ! I build my faith on that." Browning could place evil in his scheme of life, the principle of which was love. Browning had complete faith in the immortality of soul. It is the nobility and greatness of an individual's ideal that count, not his failures and imperfections. Since "man lives for even" there is no reason why he should be weighed down by disappointments and failures in this life. He exhorts us to hope for the best and to strive after our ideal. He teaches us to fear nothing, to live like a fighter all our lives because "We fall to rise, are baffled to fight better, sleep to wake." Death itself is nothing to be afraid of, for it is only the final battle, "the best and the last." Browning was passionately interested in, and in love with, existence, and his poetry is a wholesome tonic which helps us to enjoy life and realize its value.

**Clough, Fitzgerald and Thomson**—The controversy between science and religion, doubt and faith shattered all the positive beliefs of the Victorians. The challenge offered by science was met with the revival of Medieval Christianity known as the Tractarian or Oxford Movement. But Clough and Mathew Arnold could not take refuge in the dogmas of the Middle Ages, for the love of truth and intellectual honesty had been deeply inculcated in their mind by Thomas Arnold. Hence Clough and Arnold could not arrive at faith. This pessimistic and sceptical note is also present in the poetry of Fitzgerald and James Thompson. (B. V.) Clough denied the central facts of Christianity.

"Christ is not risen, no—  
He lies and mouldering low."

With the passing of faith Christ passes :

"Now he is dead, far hence he lies  
In the lorn Syrian town... .."

Fitzgerald translated the 'Rubbiyat' of the Persian poet, Omar Khayyam, whose pessimistic note and the philosophy of stoical resignation coincided with the pessimism of the age. Thompson was possessed by a blank disbelief. His 'City of Dreadful Night' is a powerful and sincere expression of an atheistic and despairing creed.

**Mathew Arnold**—The sense of pessimism, the doubts and despair which troubled the mind of the Victorians, find their fullest and most characteristic expression in Mathew Arnold: The true note of Arnold's temperament is sadness; a pensive melancholy essentially Romantic in origin. "Mathew Arnold is the greatest poet in the department of elegy and reflection" (W. H. Garrod). Arnold realizes that he has fallen upon an era of transition: he finds himself "wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born." In Arnold, we thus catch a first glimpse of the pessimism of an age of uncertainty and transition. The loss of all positive beliefs left a vacuum, a scar in his inner being which is revealed only in his poetry. This consciousness of a sad plight of affairs, "this strange disease of modern life, with its sick hurry and divided aims" is always present in his poem, whatever be its subject. 'Empedocles on Etna', 'Dover Beach', 'Rugby Chapel', 'Thyrsis', 'Scholar Gipsy', all are the cry of an agonised soul, of one who laments for the good old days,

"When wits were fresh and clear  
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames."

Such pessimistic and melancholy poetry is necessarily depressing but it does not become enervating on account of another quality of Arnold's—the presence of a fine stoical moral spirit. Arnold held that life is meant to be endured and not to be enjoyed. Even the objects of nature "seem to bear rather than rejoice." All true happiness is from within and all that the wise man can do is to seek within his own bosom for an inward good, to possess his soul in peace, while practising resignation in regard to outward things.

Arnold was a born classicist: a lover of shapeliness, restraint, clarity and simplicity. Arnold's classical tastes explain the fine reticence and restraint, that his poetry has in the expression of passion. For this reason readers—particularly young readers—often find him cold. His emotion never lets itself go "in profuse strains of unpremeditated art". Nothing, for instance, could be



more heart breaking than the death of a son at the hands of his own father and yet Rustam's lament is couched in just four words, which mean more than what the whole ocean of tears could convey : "O boy—thy father ! —and his voice choked here."

But the stress which Arnold laid on classical virtues of writing should not blind us to the Romantic traits found in his poetry. His poetry is characterized by a note of Romantic melancholy. In the Oxford poems the Arnoldian intellectual melancholy melts away into the rich background of scenery and myth. In 'Scholar Gipsy', the great modern melancholy is spiritualized into a symbol of mystery and dreams, and here the poetry of Arnold strikes the highest note. In 'Thyrsis' the sobriety and purity of Greek landscape with its almost Keatsean recreation of background, the sense of indefinable pathos brooding over the whole scenery, clothed in a suggestive and felicitous language, declare the complete blending of the classical and the Romantic.

Due to its scholarly nature, all-pervading seriousness, and the restraint of emotion and passion, Arnold's poetry has never been popular. He does not sing because he must, but because he wants to offer a criticism of life. "Magnificent and beautiful night though frosty and chill" is the final impression left on us by his poetry. His poetic genius recalls those quiet English waters which flow by Laleham Churchyard where he lies :

"And nigh to where his bones abide,  
The Thames with its unruffled tide  
Seems like his genius typified,  
Its strength, its grace  
Its lucid gleam, its grace  
Its lucid gleam, its sober pride  
Its tranquil peace." (Sir William Watson)

**The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood**—Then there came a reaction against the didacticism and rationality of Victorian poetry. There were poets who, repelled by the sordidness, ugliness and gross materialism of a scientific and mercantile generation, sought to escape through poetry to a world less vulgar and more to their minds. This aesthetic spirit in Victorian poetry is concerned with the establishment of Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. In 1818 D. G. Rossetti, J. E. Millias and W. H. Hunt established a brotherhood of painters which aimed at the revival of the method of early Italian painters in whom they found "a sweetness and sincerity of feeling." Rossetti and his followers developed along the same lines



a literary manner of their own. The literary school, due to its resemblance with the Pre-Raphaelite school of painters, came to be called by the same name. However, this school in poetry was not entirely a new development. It was anticipated in the poetry of the Romantics, especially of Keats, with its pictorial quality, minuteness of detail and sweet melody. What Rossetti and his followers did was only to stress the elements already present in the literature of a slightly earlier period. For this reason Saintsbury calls Pre-Raphaelitism a direct and legitimate development of the Romantic Revival in England.

**Rossetti**—D. G. Rossetti was the leading spirit of the movement. In his poetry he created a world which lies beyond the bounds of our practical experience—a shadowy world ruled by mystery, wonder, beauty and love, and lit by another light than that of common day. "The Renaissance of Wonder", says Theodore Watts-Dunton, "culminates in poetry as it culminates in his poetry". His poetry is passionate and sensuous like Keats'. The proximity of poetry and plastic arts is strongly marked in his work. His 'Blessed Damozel' furnishes a testimony to the fact that his outlook on world was that of a painter. Buchanan has attacked him for founding a "fleshy school of poetry." But the attack is wide off the mark, because Rossetti's sensuousness is something other than sensuality. The fact is that Rossetti was a great symbolist and for him the senses were the sacramental emblems of the spirit. Like Dante and other medievalists, Rossetti, in every department of thought and emotion, not in love only, sought for outward manifestations.

**Morris**—Like other members of this literary group, Morris also showed the same avoidance of the problems and vexations of contemporary life. His attraction for the Middle Ages is marked in 'The Defence of Guinevere and Other Poems', which consists of a series of remarkable medieval studies. The 'Earthly Paradise', his masterpiece, is a collection of twenty-four narrative poems on classic or medieval themes. Thus he tries to escape into the world of imagination and beauty, but the consciousness of ills of life and the dread of death give an unmistakable undertone of sadness to his songs:

"Kiss me, Love for who knoweth  
What thing cometh after death."

His aestheticism later led him to social reform. His socialism was

the expression of aestheticism which wanted to see the world more picturesque and beautiful.

**Swinburne**--"Swinburne was the spoilt child of the pre-Raphaelite group, at once its prodigy and its embarrassment." (Legouis). He was a man of fiery temper and unconventional morality. He leaped into prominence with the publication of 'Atlanta in Calydon.' The secret of the success this drama was the beauty of the choral passages. The boldness of the tone of sensuous pleasure in 'Poems and Ballads' provoked a scandal. These songs of love were succeeded by poems dedicated to national liberty, especially that of Italy, for Swinburne was an ardent admirer of Mazzini. Swinburne returned to love, his favourite theme, in two later series of 'Poems and Ballads', those of 1878 and 1889. He challenged Tennyson, opposing the decorous restraint of 'Idylls of the king' by the boundless passion of his 'Tristram of Lyonesse'.

Unlike other members of the Pre-Raphaelite group, Swinburne was a musician rather than a painter. The sonority of the rhymes or of the modulations is that which links his verses together. Vowels call to vowels, and consonants to consonants, and these links often seem stronger than the links of thought or imagery. Swinburne, like many other literary artists, suffers at times from the defect of his artistic virtue.

Taken as a whole the Pre-Raphaelite poetry is pretty suggestive of Decadence. Poetry divorced from any normal relation to life, is in grave peril of becoming effeminate, over-elaborate, morbid and unreal. Again, the poetry of the Pre-Raphaelites, particularly of Swinburne, opened through Victorian reticence the breach which, gradually widened, eventually let in the flood of decadent literature in the hands of the followers of Oscar Wilde. In the words of Hugh Walker, Pre-Raphaelitism has proved "an unfortunate though a potent influence." Its influence lasted for a long time and waned only when English literature entered upon a phase of greater realism and materialism with the beginning of a new turbulent century.

#### A BRIEF SYNOPSIS

1. Three factors are of great importance in the Victorian age : the advance of democratic ideals, the industrial progress, the growth of scientific spirit.

2. The Victorian age was essentially an age of compromise

3. The age is remarkable for its extreme deference to Convention and Authority.

4. In spite of its partial reversion to the spirit of eighteenth century, the Victorian age may be considered as the continuation of the age of Romantic Revival.

5. Tennyson, the most representative poet of the age, combines the profusion and variety of Romantics with the finish and discipline of the classicists. His genius was essentially lyrical, but his desire to become the prophet of his age proved a disaster. In the beginning of this century there was a reaction against him, but now his star is again rising.

6. Browning was just the antithesis of Tennyson. His forte was dramatic monologue. His poetry is characterized by profundity of thought, carelessness of form and style, use of grotesque rhymes, psychological insight into character, cosmopolitanism and an optimistic concept of life.

7. The growth of scientific spirit shattered all faith and belief and created an atmosphere of doubt and despair which is reflected in the poetry of Clough, Thompson, Fitzgerald and Arnold. Mathew Arnold's poetry is marked by a deep elegiac note, a spirit of stoical resignation, reticence and restraint in style and passion.

8. The Pre-Raphaelitism came as a reaction against the didacticism and rationality of Victorian Poetry. The poetry of Rossetti and Morris is characterised by a dreaming tendency, pictorial suggestiveness, symbolism, love of the Middle ages and of the ancient Greek world. In Swinburne the movement entered on its phase of decadence.



## 5. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

**Idealistic reaction against the didacticism of Victorian literature**—In the reign of Queen Victoria poetry, along with the novel and the prose, seems to depart from the purely artistic standard of art for art's sake, and to be actuated by a definite moral purpose. Literature became the vehicle of social, political and moral problems that were tormenting the people of the time. Then there came an idealistic reaction against this pre-occupation with

contemporary life. There were poets who, repelled by the sordidness, ugliness and materialism of a scientific and mercantile generation, sought to escape in poetry to a world less vulgar and more to their minds. Like Keats, they ignored the peculiar hopes and perplexities of their ages to wander after the all-sufficient spirit of beauty, and like Keats, they found refuge in the romance and mysticism of the Middle Ages or in the repose, restraint, and beauty of the world of the Greeks. This aesthetic and neo-classic spirit in literature, was associated with the rise of a new school of painters, known as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

**What is Pre-Raphaelitism ?**—In 1810 two German painters, Cornelius and Overbuck, founded a society in Rome, called the German Pre-Raphaelite Brethern. They gave themselves this name because they drew inspiration from Italian painters before Raphael, in whom they found a sweetness, depth and sincerity of devotional feeling, a self-forgetfulness and humble adherence to truth, which were absent from the sophisticated art of Raphael and his successors. In 1848 a Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed in England by three young painters, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt. They aimed at a return to older principles in painting, but as Rossetti and many of his followers were gifted writers, their work gave rise to a literary movement along the same lines. In painting they advocated a close study of nature and a revival of the spirit and methods of the early Italian painters. They aimed at infusing the same spirit into literature, but as the movement progressed it developed a literary manner of its own which, though not strictly Pre-Raphaelite in character, is still given that name for want of anything more accurate.

**Its kinship with Romantic Revival**—It would be wrong to regard Pre-Raphaelitism as an entirely new development. It was anticipated in many ways in the early 19th century by Coleridge and by Scott, and especially by Keats and later by Tennyson, whose mastery of poetic technique set them a standard they endeavoured to follow. Like Keats the poets of this school were above all artists. Art was their religion. Though earlier in date, Keats' 'Eve of St. Agnes' may be called typical of the Pre-Raphaelite poetry—picturesque, passionate, exquisite in detail, and with all the exaltation and idealism of the troubadours in its treatment of love. Rossetti derived the impulse which led him to initiate the movement from Lord Houghton's life and Letters of Keats',



in which he first read of Keats' interest in Italian Pre-Raphaelite painting. What Rossetti and his followers actually did was to stress an element already present in the literature of a slightly earlier period. For this reason Saintsbury call Pre-Raphaelitism a direct and legitimate development of the Romantic Revival in England.

**Dante Gabriel Rossetti**—D. G. Rossetti, the son of an exiled Italian painter and scholar, was the leading spirit of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Rossetti's poetic world lies beyond the bounds of our practical experience—a shadowy world ruled by mystery, wonder, beauty and love and lit by another light than that of common day. In his poetry something of the unearthly spirit of Blake and of the poet of the 'Ancient Mariner', something of the magic of Keats' *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, survives. "The Renaissance of Wonder", says Theodore Watts-Dunton, "culminates in Rossetti's poetry as it culminates in his paintings."

Although not a painter himself, the pictorial suggestiveness of Keats' poetry proved a fruitful inspiration to the Pre-Raphaelite group of which Rossetti was the most distinguished representative. That the pictorial element is more insistent in Rossetti than in Keats is obviously due to the fact that Rossetti's outlook on the world is essentially that of a painter. He thinks and feels in pigments. Who but a painter would have given us lines like these.

"The blessed damozel leaned out  
From the gold bar of heaven".

And,

"She had three lilies in her hand  
And the stars in her hair were seven."

And,

"And the sails mounting upto God  
Went by her like thin flames."

This is not merely the verse of a pictorial artist, but of a Pre-Raphaelite artist. In the words underlined above the familiar symbolism of the medieval colourists is clearly discerned.

No doubt Rossetti was highly sensuous but his sensuousness must be clearly distinguished from mere sensuality. The senses were for Rossetti sacramental emblems of the spirit. In every department of thought and emotion, not in love only, Rossetti sought for the outward manifestations. He valued the physical



expression, the outward manifestation, not as does the mere sensualist as something disconnected from the inner life, but as the visible power that would turn life and character into beauty and nobility. He worshiped beauty—

“Whose speech truth knows not from her thought,  
Nor love her body from her soul.”

In ‘The Blessed Damozel’, his masterpiece, this materialization of things spiritual and unseen is all-prevailing. Therefore, Robert Buchanan’s attack on Rossetti for establishing ‘the Fleshly school of poetry’ is widely off the mark, because Rossetti’s sensuousness is something other than sensuality.

Profound thinkers and more varied singers the last century has given us, but Rossetti has expressed, in a way no other poet has done, the hunger of the human heart for love and beauty, the hunger of the human soul for those impalpable mysteries that touch the horizon of human thought.

**William Morris**—Among the little band of followers that Rossetti gathered around him in the earlier part of his career was William Morris, a man of restless energy and an extra-ordinary versatility of mind. In early manhood Morris was fascinated by the strange beauty of ‘The Blessed Damozel’, and a little later he met Rossetti and was strongly influenced by his magnetic personality. Like the other members of the little group, Morris was strongly attracted to the Middle Ages, and his first book ‘The Defence of Gunevere and Other Poems’, consists of a series of remarkable medieval studies. One of the poems in this collection ‘The Haystack in the Flood’, presents the passionate and savage side of medieval life with truth and power; but many of the poems are purely pictorial. In these poems everything is studiously unreal. The knight, the maidens with blue eyes and yellow hair and decorative fingers and all those subjects and images which were the theatrical properties of the Pre-Raphaelites are freely introduced.

Morris showed the same avoidance of the problems and vexations of contemporary life in his classical study ‘The Life and Death of Jason’, and in ‘The earthly Paradise’, containing the most and probably the best of his poems. “The Earthly Paradise” is a collection of twenty-four romantic narrative poems in classical or medieval themes. A company of adventures, having left Norway in the time of pestilence in search of an earthly paradise,

where they may escape the fear of death, are hospitably received at a Western city, founded by Greek exiles centuries before. For the space of a year the mariner and his hosts meet and regale the time with telling the stories drawn from many sources which compose the main part of the poem. While reading the poem we are transported to an enchanted region, a world of beautiful illusions, where everything seems shadowy and unreal. A thread of connection, similar to that employed in 'The Canterbury Tales', holds these stories together. Morris attempted to do no more in 'The Earthly Paradise' than bring a temporary repose and forgetfulness through art. But even in 'The Earthly Paradise', a poem in which the "idle singer" deliberately seeks for relief in a world of the ideal, there is a subdued but unmistakable undertone of sadness. Art such as this may be sedative, but the poet knows that it is powerless to ease the real ills of life, that it cannot "make quick-coming death a little thing." The spirit of Morris and Rossetti was essentially pagan in their poetry, and as in so much pagan literature, the love of life is quickened by the dread of death. A philosophy and mood similar to the pagan is summed up in one of the refrains of Morris's songs :

"Kiss me, love, for who knoweth  
What thing cometh after death."

But Morris, in spite of his poems, was no mere dreamer : he was a robust man, full of vitality, a fighter and a reformer. In his later years, he faced, as Ruskin did, the pressing social questions of his time, and strove manfully "to set the crooked straight." He abandoned the liberal party in 1880, and, a little later, actively espoused the socialistic cause. A belief in the possibility of social reform gave a new hopefulness and vigour to some of Morris's later verses and entered largely into his prose-romance, 'The Dream of John Ball'. Morris's socialism was, however, largely the expression of his aesthetic and artistic ideals, it sprang rather from his desire to make the world more picturesque and beautiful than from any deep human sympathy.

**A. C. Swinburne** :—He leaped into prominence with the publication of 'Atlanta in Calydon' which triumphantly vindicated his claim to a foremost place among the poets of his time. As a lyrical drama it is a superb piece of art, which marks out as clearly his kinship with Shelley as did Rossetti's poems his affinity with Keats.

His subjects were the great romantic themes, Shelley's and Landor's revolt against society, the hatred of kings and priests, and the struggle against conventional morality. Swinburn's passion was sincere enough, but it was neither very personal nor very new. It was in the form of his poems, in his extra-ordinary lyrical onrush, that his mastery shone forth. For he was essentially lyrical even when he attempted drama, as he did at the start of his career. The success of 'Atlanta in Calydon' was due to the beauty of the choral passages. Dramatic movement and the creation of characters were outside his range.

The boldness of the tone of sensuous pleasure in 'Poems and Ballads' provoked a scandal. But it was also a revelation of splendid audacity which aroused the enthusiasm of the younger generation, a thunder-clap like the appearance of 'Childe Harold' fifty years earlier. This violent paganism broke in upon Victorian reserve: it was passion's claim to express itself without reticence; it was the first far-heard signal of a revolt that was not to become general till a generation later.

These songs of love were succeeded by poems dedicated to national liberty, especially that of Italy, the Swinburne was an ardent admirer of Mazzini. The vagueness and even emptiness of his rhapsodies are compensated for and veiled by his unfailing lyric ardour.

Swinburne returned to love, his favourite theme, in two later series of 'Poems and Ballads', those of 1878 and 1889. He challenged Tennyson, opposing the decorous restraint of the 'Idylls of the Kings' by the boundless passion of his 'Tristram of Lyonesse' in which the ancient legend is retold by a poet unhampered by any moral consideration.

Unlike other members of the Pre-Raphaelite group he was a musician rather than a painter. However exquisite its musical qualities may be, the poetry of Rossetti or of Morris is primarily pictorial. It has line and colour. Swinburne's poetry lacks firm contours and sure outlines. The sonority of the rhymes or of the modulations is that which links the verses together. Vowels call to vowels, and consonants to consonants, and these links often seem stronger than the links of thought or imagery. The alliteration and the onomatopoeic effects seem to arise quite spontaneously as in the opening lines of a chorus of 'Atlanta in Calydon':

"When the hounds of spring are on Winter's traces;  
The mother of months in meadow and plain  
Fills the shadow and windy places.  
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain".

And how cunningly the differences in speed are rendered in :

"The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,  
But the berried ivy catches and cleaves  
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare  
The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies".

What the proseman does by logical suasion and most poets by pictorial appeal and intellectual suggestion, Swinburne tries to achieve by metrical modulation and the complex varieties of rhythmic cadences. The attempt is a daring one and, it may be frankly said, is a method of approach that is apt to fatigue the reader when carried to excess. Swinburne, like many other literary artists suffers at times from the defect of his artistic virtue.

**Decline of Pre-Raphaelitism**—Taken as a whole the Pre-Raphaelite poetry is pretty suggestive of decadence. Rossetti and his associates separated themselves from activities and responsibilities of their time, from the ordinary interests, occupations, consolations and desires of the men about them, and built a palace of Art for their delight and refuse. Poetry, divorced from any normal relation to life, is in grave peril of becoming effeminate, over-elaborate, morbid and unreal. The element of decadence is very pronounced in the poems of Swinburne. He was the spoilt child of the Pre-Raphaelite group, at once its prodigy and its embarrassment. His poems opened through Victorian reticence the breath which gradually widened, eventually let in the flood of decadent literature in the hands of the followers of Oscar Wilde. In the words of Hugh Walker, Pre Raphaelitism has proved "an unfortunate though potent influence." Its influence lasted for a long time. The lamp was burning; the oil was spent; the smoke lingered and lingered; and we know not where it ended. The baneful influence of Pre-Raphaelitism only waned when English literature entered upon a phase of greater realism and materialism with the beginning of a turbulent new century.

#### A BRIEF SYNOPSIS

1. The Pre-Raphaelite Movement was an idealistic reaction against the didacticism and pre-occupation with contemporary life of Victorian literature.

2. The Movement is given that name because it was started to infuse into literature the spirit and the ideals of Italian painters before Raphael.

3. Pre-Raphaelitism was not something entirely new. It was a direct and legitimate development of Romantic Revival in England.

4. D. G. Rossetti was the guiding spirit of the Movement. His poetic world lies beyond the bounds of our practical experience. His poetry is characterized by a deep sense of mystery and wonder, pictorial suggestiveness and symbolism. His masterpiece, 'The Blessed Damozel' is a model of Pre-Raphaelite poetry.

5. Morris was a devout follower of Rossetti. Like other members of the group he was strongly attracted to the Middle Ages, 'The Earthly Paradise' is a collection of twenty-four romantic narrative poems in classical or medieval themes : In the later years of his life he faced the pressing social needs of his age and espoused the cause of socialism.

6. Swinburne was a man of fiery temper and unconventional morality. His genius was essentially lyrical. Unlike other member of the Pre-Raphaelite group he was a musician rather than a painter.

7. Taken as a whole the Pre-Raphaelite poetry is pretty suggestive of decadence. It has proved an unfortunate though a potent influence.

## 6. Trends in Modern Poetry

*including*

### Lyric in the 20th Century

In the twentieth century for the first time in England, poetry shoulder to shoulder with novel, has smiled with victory over all other departments of literature. Among the various types of poetry, it is lyric poetry that is most popular : Satire and longer narrative poetry have mostly gone over to prose and the novel; and the modern age is not the age of epic poetry. But a few short lyrics are associated with the name of almost every poet of the age. Furthermore, this period is called the age of democracy,



and therefore, one powerful personality dominating the entire age like Tennyson, Johnson, or Pope has become an anachronism. It is rather an age of anthology in which several poets working together send out volumes of short poems for the delight of the people.

The topic as to when modern era sets in has been controversial. In order to settle this issue we have to isolate the moment at which Victorianism is spent and some signs of new morn are discernible upon the horizon. In literature there are no watertight compartments and, therefore, no definite line of demarcation can be pointed out separating the modern age from the Victorian era. However, it is a largely accepted opinion that modern poetry sees the light with the publication of the Georgian poetry in 1912. But the twelve years preceding it are important in their own way in which the old snake changes in outer scaly garb for a fresh one.

**Survivors and Precursors**—The twentieth century opens like the football match being played in a heavy rain, passive and spiritless; or rather in a way it shows that fabulous calm which precedes the last turmoil. Old pens are writing with new ink. Leaving aside decadents such as Dawson and Davidson and aesthetes such as Oscar Wilde who really belong to the last decade of the 19th century, we see certain figures who belong as much to the previous century as to the present. They have been called 'survivors and precursors' by A. C. Ward.

In the time sense Robert Bridges was a Victorian poet; in form and spirit he belonged to the new century. He wrote many love lyrics but his voice was never lifted in a shout of joy; nor in his elegies did it shrill into complaint. He is always serene; his an "emotions recollected in tranquility". His famous lyric on the 'Nightingales' is on the lips of all genuine lovers of English poetry. It was in 1929, a little before his death, that he published his best and ambitious work, 'The Testament of Beauty'. This long philosophical poem contains Bridges' reflections upon man and the universe couched in a voice of serene assurance, thus providing a courageous and healthy guidance in an age torn with doubt, despair, and perplexity. Apart from its sublime philosophy, the book opens a new chapter in the history of English metre. Bridges had long been experimenting with classical metres in English in his shorter poems, but it was in this magnum opus of his life that he evolved a new kind of verse, known as verse libre.

The poetry of blatant and aggressive English nationalism was written by Rudyard Kipling. His poetry had little metaphysical appeal and was inspired by the conviction that his country-men had a mission to civilise the world's

"...fluttered folk and wild—  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half-devil and half-child."

Kipling's doctrine of militant nationalism and the whiteman's burden antagonised sober readers who considered him insensitive, loud and vulgar. Kipling is not a great poet, but he is avowedly the idol of the British Tommy and his soldier and sailor rhymes are among his most characteristic though not best poems.

W. B. Yeats, the founder of the Irish literary movement, began as a full-blooded romantic, a dreamer of dreams, the best expression of which is found in his famous lyric. 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'. His poems found a ready response in England perhaps as an antidote to the blatant vulgarity of Kipling. As Dr. Bowra writes, "The writer of theme is a belated Pre-Raphaelite, a good pupil of Morris, a poet of escape, singer of music in the deep heart's core." In the second phase of his work Yeats shows the influence of symbolism, especially of the French symbolist Mallarme. But instead of the private symbols of Mallarme, Yeats uses the images of Celtic mythology. In the final phase of his poetic career, which began with the 'Green Helmet. (1910), romantic decoration, mythology and vague music of his earlier poems have been replaced by a new immediacy and concreteness, and a terse, and unadorned language. In fact, with the passage of times he seemed to grow weary of pure romanticism as he himself said, "I am worn out with dreams."

Hardy now published his 'Dynasts'. Its theme, its purpose and view of life are exactly the same as of his novels. It is both epic and drama, narrative and lyric and tells the story of Europe between the battles of Trafalgar and Waterloo. Its short lyrics are pithily condensed in expression often intentionally angular in rhythm, but always showing great technical care and love of experimentation.

Another remarkable poetical creation of the early years of the present century was the poet-laureate John Masefield's. 'The Everlasting Mercy' which proved to be a phenomenal success on its appearance in 1911. This long narrative poem was an attempt to

represent in verse, realistically, the spiritual conversion of a prodigal, Saul Kane. Though some of the later poems of Masfield contain a greater essence of true poetry. 'The Everlasting Mercy' remains in a class apart, an epitome of the new influences in society and the reaction towards bringing poetry close to the common man.

**War Poets**—The First World War disorganised society and literature in several ways. Most of the men of letters served in the various theatres of war and quite a few of them were killed in action. Nevertheless, they left behind them a considerable volume of poetry, mirroring their sentiments and reactions to the great catastrophe.

The most outstanding of these war-poets is Rupert Brooke who became almost a national hero, a symbol of patriotism and sacrifice owing to his early death in 1915. Among his war poems 'The Soldier' is most famous. Brooke takes a glorious view of war speaks of its heroics, and not its brutalities and ghastliness. Though not moved by the same measure of heroic fervour 'Jublian Grenfell, another casualty in war, maintains a spirit of tranquility and confidence not found in other war-time poets. His famous poem 'Into Battle' mirrors the attitude of calm and confidence in which even death does not appear the horror it is.

Very different from these are the soldier-poets, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen. Sassoon who was invalidated early in the war, does not throw any romantic veil over the horrors of war, which he depicts "as a dirty mess of blood and decaying bodies" and "the hell where youth and laughter go." Wilfred Owen, who died fighting in 1918, also had no illusions about war, as is clear from an unfinished preface to his poems,

"This book is not concerned with Poetry  
The subject of it is War, and the pity of War  
The Poetry is in the pity."

If Sassoon, Owen and others voiced the poignancy of life during the holocaust of war, W. W. Gibson captured in his poetry that great evil of both war and peace—modern industrialism, its dullness, dreariness and deadening specialization. Gibson depicts a world of arduous manual labour, in which machines have become the master of man, subjecting the majority of people to a hand-to-mouth life :

"All life moving to one measure—  
Daily bread, daily bread."

**Return to Romance and Nature**—In sharp contrast to the unlovely subjects of bloodshed and death or the murky hell of industry, J. E. Flecker and Walter De La Mare present a breath of old world romance, the one escaping into the realms of oriental splendour and the other seeking refuge in the world of children's innocence. Like Keats, Flecker wrote "with the single intention of creating beauty", and his oriental play 'Hassan' (1922) abounds in poetic delights, particularly in the lyrics which form the best part of this drama. 'The War Song of the Saracens' and 'The Golden Journey to Samarkand' represent the fulfilment of Flecker's quest for beauty. Walter De La Mare returns to the direct vision of childhood though his imagination and intellect are as mature as those of adults. In his mysticism he recalls Blake who could see divinity in a grain of sand.

Another set of poets, who turned their back upon the drab and unsatisfying reality of their age found, like Wordsworth, solace in the bosom of Nature. W. H. Davies, who related the story of his early life in 'The Autobiography of a Super Tramp' "flies to Nature for solace and forgetfulness, pursuing joy, eschewing sadness" As is clear from his poem 'Leisure', he is not so much anxious to read any philosophical meaning or moral pattern in Nature as to watch her beauty, enjoy her external charms. His discontent with a jaded, hectic world, as well as his passion for loveliness of nature is well echoed in the following oft-quoted lines :

"A poor life this, if full of care  
We have no time to stand and stare".

Edmund Blunden, who is still alive and creative, is a greater Nature poet, who completely indentified himself with Nature in various moods.

**The Impressionistic School of Sitwells**—Now we turn to the radical innovators and experimenters in English poetry in the immediate post war period. One of these groups consists of the triumvirate of the Sitwells, Edith and her two brothers, Osbert and Sachervell. The Sitwells set up an anti-traditional movement and launched upon a vigorous controversy in making out a case for a new conception and technique of poetry. They did not simply adopt verse libre but went a step further in evolving a new phraseology and vocabulary as well. In 'Who Killed Cock Robin?' Osbert Sitwell stated the aims of new poetry and, among other



things stated : "you can not write well in the idiom of the day before yesterday."

The most revolutionary of the three was Edith and the least revolutionary Sachervell. Poetic artistry was the life's devotion of Edith. Her brother Osbert said of her :

"Ascetic artist of the painting word  
Your whole life bent to this one, selfless cause  
Of netting beauty with a phrase of pause."

The innovations of Edith lie (a) in seeking to communicate sensation, more than to describe ; (b) in avoidance of worn-out traditional imagery and metaphor ; (c) in adopting poetry to modern musical (mainly dance) rhythms. What measure this type of impressionistic technique of poetry achieved is a highly debatable proposition, but to an average reader much of these experiments seem to be poetic freaks rather than solid poetic achievement.

**The Imagists**—The imagists were equally unconventional, they also shunned abstractions, aimed at utmost economy of words, and reduced poetic ornament to the minimum. They wished to produce poems with the sharpness of outline and precision of form which belong to perfectly proportioned statuette or other carved image. "An image", they defined "is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant." The chief exponents of this school were T. E. Hulme, Richard Aldington, F. S. Flint, Ezra Pound and H. D. (Hilda Doolittle — Mrs. Aldington).

Hulme's main theme was that it was the discovery of a new verse form that gave new poetic life and that each age, because of its changed outlook, required a new verse form to express it. He had been impressed by the freedom and the new life given to poetry in France in the eighties of the last century by the discovery of verse libre, and he felt that this harmonise with the new age whose philosophy was that truth was not absolute but relative. There was now a "tentative and half shy manner of looking at things", poetry was introspective and was concerned with communicating vague and momentary phases of the poet's mind; and poetry was now to be read silently rather than aloud. In this new world verse libre was apt; here was the proper rhythm. But a new rhythm was not enough ; it should be accompanied by new analogies—fresh metaphors must startle the reader out of the doze



of habit. Here the classical cast of Hulme's mind dictated that the images must be clear, concise and accurate—they must call up a well-defined picture to the mind's eye.

This new kind of poetry, as conceived and practised by Hulme, was called Imagism, and Hulme has been called the Father of Imagism. His friend Ezra Pound shared his views, and there arose a movement both in England and America devoted to it. A perfect instance of the Imagist poem was Pound's :

“The apparition of these faces in the crowd .

Petals on a wet, black bough.”

The last joint volume of Imagist poetry appeared in 1917 but the new technique made a notable contribution to later poetry, and one of the original Imagists, H. D. developed the manner into some of her best poetry, which appeared in the forties, as in ‘The Walls Do Not Fall’ of 1944. “Imagism was but a beginning”, says Dr. A. S. Collins, “but it was a beginning fraught with possibilities. Given the new rhythms and the imagery, poetry might have had a rebirth without the unleashing of the various new forces in the wake of the War. The limitation of Imagism was that it concentrated too exclusively on a new technique, holding that the subject was relatively unimportant. But in the meantime the cult of direct concise, clear treatment in a new rhythm worked for good.”

**The Surrealists**—Another important trend in modern poetry is surrealism. This movement which was already strong on the Continent, was felt in England in the years on the threshold of the thirties. The chief exponents of this movement, Dylan Thomas, Herbert Read, George Barker and David Gascoyne made poetry again obscure. It was a purer poetry in that it came from deeper levels of consciousness, was less deliberately intellectual, and had no political purpose. A poet like Dylan Thomas had no such aim as that of healing the Waste Land, but, as Stephen Spender expressed it later, it was the voice not of the doctor but of the patient that was now heard : “the poet no longer stands outside the Waste Land. He is the flower.” These were the poets who in England made the nearest approach to surrealism, which, if practised ideally, meant the release by the poet of whatever welled up from within him without any conscious control or selection. Such pure surrealism was probably very rarely, if ever, achieved because the conscious mind always insists upon having share in

transmitting material to paper, and the poetry of Dylan Thomas always showed an attention to poetic technique which could not be purely spontaneous.

**The New Metaphysicals**—The tendency towards obscurity is even more noticeable with T. S. Eliot at their head. An acknowledged traditionalist (in his own sense) Mr. Eliot's approach is essentially eclectic. He is a class by himself. He looked at war in a completely different mood. His 'Waste Land' and 'Hollow Men' are classics on the subject of waste and futility of war. Having an immense knowledge at his back of various cultures, their literature and philosophy, his endeavours are to synthesize them into a condensed and homogeneous whole. His technique of poetry is a blend of the art of the 17th century metaphysical poets, especially of Donne, with the visual imagery of the French symbolists and the imagists, and also with the genius of Hopkins' poetry. But this does not mean that Eliot is an imitator. His art is, on the other hand, that of a co-ordinator. Imprint of his genius is always there. For him poetry is not an expression of personality but an escape from it into art. Personal experiences, only when purged of their idiosyncrasies by going through a universalizing process, become fit for objective expression.

Consciousness of the waste and futility of war, and the desolation and hopelessness resulting from it once more brought God in purview. A sincere quest for positive faith emerged, and we have another marked tendency with the opening of the thirties. Religious poetry came to be written under the influence of the 17th century metaphysical poets. What gave a further impetus to the writing of religious poetry was the popularity of Hopkins after being resurrected by Bridges in 1918. The poetry of Hopkins had qualities which particularly appealed to the post-war world; it revealed a sense of spiritual tension and frustration; it combined a powerful intellect with a strong sensuousness; it possessed a bold originality of technique. The greatness of his poetry can be judged from the impact it made upon poets who did not share the religion which inspired and governed all that Hopkins wrote. Mr. Eliot himself now turned his face away from the faithlessness of the 'Waste Land' and 'Hollowmen' and in 'Ash Wednesday' sought refuge in the Anglo-Catholic doctrines of faith. Since then, religion has become his voice and he has been considered by some as the lost leader, 'Burnt Norton', 'East Coker', 'The Dry Salvages' and the

'Little Gidding' each of these of the 'Four Quartets' reveals symbolically this highest faith and is a finely universalised song of enchantment of the highest Entity in a sober and philosophical tone.

**Oxford Leftists**—Eliot became a potent force in English letters in nineteen-thirties and his influence is still considerable. The poets of the younger generation who came most under his spell are W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, C. D. Lewis and Louis Mac Neice. Though Eliot influenced their poetic technique to some extent, the thought-content of their poetry sought its inspiration elsewhere—chiefly in the springs of Communism and Socialism. As A. C. Ward has put it, "...whereas salvation through Christ and damnation through sin were the alpha and omega of John Donne and of the puritans, salvation through Marx and damnation through capitalism were the twentieth century substitutes." These Oxford leftists shatter into pieces Eliot's conception of poetry for a few, and bring their poems before the masses. Naturally, with an intention to make contact with a wider audience, they set their aims for a more colloquial expression and used the vocabulary, idiom and rhythm of every day speech. The Waste 'Land they saw, but they did not despair to witness the wretched bleakness, constantly soring, but on the other hand they determined to use poetry to assist in healing.

W. H. Auden, the acknowledged leader of the school, had a wide intellectual curiosity. After the former obscurity in expression which had resulted from the oftener use of a private language, he developed a sweet lyric faculty. Influenced by Eliot, Owen, and Hopkins on the formal side, his technique gives a combined impression of the symbolic method of the first, the use of assonance and internal rhythm of the second and the sprung rhythm of the third. On the material side, his is a class conscious poetry dominated by the conception of men in society. His 'Spain' is a most ambitious poetry revealing a faith in a violent social revolution as a means to a better order. But there is always a sympathetic touch, which is more humanitarian, behind his rollicking funs and practical jokes which are aimed at showing his contempt upon the bourgeois.

C. D. Lewis, though Auden's close intimate, has not the same restless intellect and exquisiteness of knowledge. Obsessed with the political ideals, his poems often turn into first rate lyrics when they are inspired by nature. He was an 'open-air poet', above

all the poet of the wind and the bird-song. His 'Transitional Poems' and 'Form Feathers to Iron' are collections of short pieces of lyrics. But his 'Magnetic Mountain', a thesis how to abolish the old and bring the new world, is a sweet propaganda.

From the beginning Stephen Spender took the most objective view among these poets of the social and political scene, though he also became the most introspective of them. He sounded the dirge of the old world.

"...where shapes of death haunt life"  
must go, and the young comrades must  
"...advance to rebuild.....advance to rebel",  
giving up  
"dreams.....of heaven after our world"  
they must follow

"the palpable and obvious love of man for man."  
His 'Vienna' dealt with the clash between the dying civilisation of the bourgeoisie and the new life of the workers, unhappily crushed in this instance by the political rulers of Austria. The choruses in his play 'The Trial of a Judge, which showed the dilemma of the just judge between the milestones of Right and Left, had not the poetic quality of choruses in Auden's plays.

Mac Neice was too balanced to believe in Utopia, and point out that though, like snow, Communism might give the world and appearance of uniformity, that "perfection" could be maintained but "for one day only". He warned his idealist companion not to.

"hanker for a perfection which can never come."  
His art is often pictorial. A pure artist than Auden, Mac Neice is acutely aware of the musical and rhythmical potentialities of the language. 'Eclogue From Iceland' and 'Bag Pipe-Muse' are his first rate poems.

Such is the Proteus-shape phenomenon of twentieth century poetry. Never poetry saw such enthusiasm for the lyrical note. With indefatigable experimentation in rhythm and metre, in blending the impression of the sense with the intellectual, the modern poets have knocked at all the resources of subject matter and expression from the past and have endeavoured to give a co-ordinate and homogenous effect of all these. From decade to decade it races in a snaky curve, from trend to trend with the slipperiness of an eel. The tendencies in the late fifties have not



yet become conspicuous, though the effects are most salutary and healthy. Arnold's prophecy has proved to be true and the age has felt that really "the future of poetry is immense."

### TRENDS IN MODERN POETRY

#### A Synopsis—

1. Among the various types of poetry it is lyric poetry that is most popular."

2. **Survivors and Precursors**—(i) Robert Bridges—His poetry is characterized by a note of serenity. 'In his 'Testament of Beauty' he evolved a new kind of verse, known as verse libre. (ii) Rudyard Kipling—He wrote poetry of blatant and aggressive English nationalism. (iii) W. B. Yeats—In the first phase of his career he is a full-blooded romantic, a dreamer of dreams. In the second phase he shows the influence of French symbolism. The final phase of his literary career is characterized by a new immediacy and concreteness, and terse and unadorned language. (iv) Thomas Hardy—His 'Dynasts' tells the story of Europe between the battles of Trafalgar and Waterloo. (v) John Masfield—His 'Everlasting Mercy' was an attempt to represent in verse, realistically, the spiritual conversion of a prodigal Saul Kane.

3. **War Poets**—(i) Rupert Brooke—He takes a glorious view of war and speaks of its heroics, (ii) Julian Grenfell—He also maintains a spirit of tranquillity and confidence (iii) Siegfried Sassoon and (iv) Wilfred Owen do not throw any romantic veil over the horrors of war. (v) W. W. Gibson—He captured that great evil of both war and peace—modern industrialisation with its attendant evils.

4. **Return to Romance and Nature**—(i) J. E. Flecker—His famous oriental play 'Hasan' represents his quest for beauty (ii) Walter De La Mare—he makes a return to the direct vision of Childhood. (iii) W. H. Davies—He flies to nature for solace and forgetfulness, (iv) Edmund Blunden—He completely identified himself with Nature in her various moods.

5. **The Impressionistic School Sitwells**—(i) Osbert Sitwell (ii) Sachervell Sitwell (iii) Edith Sitwell. They set up an anti traditional movement and launched upon a vigorous controversy in making out a case for a new conception and technique of poetry.

6. **The Imagists**—(i) T. E. Hulme (ii) Richard Aldington (iii) F. S. Flint (iv) Ezra Pound (v) H. D. (Hilda Doolittle—



Mrs. Aldington). An image is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant. They wished to produce poems with the sharpness of outline and precision of form, aimed at utmost economy of words, shunned abstractions.

7. **The Surrealists**—(i) Dylan Thomas (ii) Herbert Read (ii) George Baker (iv) David Gascoyne. Surrealism means the release by poet of whatever welled up from within him without any conscious control or selection.

8. **The New Metaphysicals**—(i) T. S. Eliot—His approach is eclectic. After 'The Waste Land' and 'Hollowman' he turns to religious poetry. Each of the 'Four Quartets' is a finely universalised song of enchantment of the highest Entity in a sober and philosophical tone.

9. **Oxford Leftists**—They sought inspiration in the springs of communism and socialism. (i) W. H. Auden—His is the class conscious poetry dominated by the conception of men in society (ii) C. D. Lewis—Obsessed with political ideals, his poems turn into first rate lyrics when inspired by nature. (iii) Stephen Spender—He is the most objective and introspective of this group of poets. (iv) Mac Neice—His art is often pictorial.

10. The future of poetry is immense.

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# **Literary Essays**

## **SEC. 4** **CRITICISM**



## 1. Criticism—Its Nature & Function

“Criticism is the art of interpreting art. It serves as an intermediary between the author and the reader by explaining the one to the other. By his special aptitude and training, the critic feels the virtue of a masterpiece, disengages it and sets it forth.”

—*Walter Pater*

In its strict sense the word criticism means judgement, and this sense commonly colours our use of it even when it is most broadly employed. The literary critic is, therefore, regarded primarily as an expert who brings a special faculty and training to bear upon a piece of literary art, or the work of a given author, examines its merits and defects, and pronounces a verdict upon it. In its wider application criticism, as Mathew Arnold defines it, is “a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.” It is an endeavour “in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is.” Its tendency, he tells us, is to make the best ideas prevail, and as these ideas reach society they set up the stir and growth from which come the creative epochs of literature.

Poetry, drama, novel, deal directly with life. Criticism deals with poetry, drama, novel, even with criticism itself. If creative literature may be defined as an interpretation of life under the various forms of literary art, critical literature may be defined as an interpretation of that interpretation and of the forms of art through which it is given.

While discussing the nature of criticism it is essential to make a touching reference to a point which is commonly lost sight of. The distinction between the literature which deals directly with life, and the literature which deals with literature, fundamental as it may seem at first, is after all an artificial one. Literature is made out of whatever interest us in life. But personality is manifestly one of the chief facts in life, and one of the most profoundly interesting. It follows, therefore, that the critic who undertakes the interpretation of the personality of a great writer as it is revealed in his work,



and of that work in all its varied aspects as the expression of the man himself, is just as truly dealing with life as was the poet or the dramatist whose writings form the subject of his study. A noble book is as living a thing as a noble deed, and the processes of art are just as vital as those which are involved in any other of life's many sided activities. This view has been admirably expressed by Mr. William Watson, who, to the objection that he has too often sought in "singers' selves"—in the work of other poets—his theme of song, replies that he has taken the great poets as his matter deliberately,

"Holding these also to be very part  
Of Nature's greatness, and accounting not  
Their descants least heroical of deeds."

So far as the current prejudice against criticism is based upon its being parasitic in nature, its supposed difference in kind from that creative literature which draws matter and inspiration directly from life, it has thus to be set aside. "True criticism also draws its matter and inspiration from life and in its own way it likewise is creative." — (*W. H. Hudson*)

Another objection that is generally raised against criticism is that it is "a self cancelling business", that there are no principles of criticism. The history of criticism is little more than a record of quarrels and contradictions, assertions and denials, standards set up only to be knocked down again. The fact that no two great critics agree in their valuation of a particular poem and a particular poet leads us to the conclusion that literary criticism is purely a matter of personal likes and dislikes. If literature is multitudinous and lawless like life itself, literary criticism is above fixities and principles like the individual. But is this really a correct statement of the facts? Are the results obtained by the exercise of judgement in literature so variable, uncertain and inconclusive as they are often alleged to be? While the history of criticism does exhibit the strangest oppositions of taste and most violent fluctuations of judgment even in regard to subjects of fundamental importance, it exhibits also from time to time a well marked tendency among the critics to come to a substantial agreement on essential points. Faith in the possibility that principles of literary criticism can be formed out of the confusion of conflicting judgement builds itself on the fact that certain landmarks have maintained their positions in the shifting sands of opinion. Kalidas, Homer, Dante, Goethe, Valmiki, Shakespeare have stood the test of time,

culture and individuality : they are acknowledged by all to have given the world masterpieces of the art of literature the quality of which is universally esteemed and appreciated. If all readers find something precious and valuable in the same poems and the poets, they should agree on the principles on which the excellence of literary works of art can be determined.

The principles of literary criticism can never be a set of standard weights and measures for estimating the value of a work of art. They can never make reading a full-proof, mechanically precise operation. Reading will always continue to be an exploratory adventure in a land of surprises and illusions. The principles of criticism only facilitate this adventure by equipping the reader with some general directions about the nature of literature and some particular hints on the methods of study. The principles of criticism are a matter of practical convenience rather than of theoretical precision. These principles have emerged out of the literary experience and culture of many generations and different civilizations. Men have always thought about literature and tried to fix the characteristic marks of literary excellence. The tradition of wisdom distilled from such thought and experience is made accessible in the form of critical principles.

In order to appreciate and interpret truly the critic must be equipped with certain qualifications. Like the creating artist he must be a man of great imagination and insight, of keen perception and trained mind. Ben Jonson only gives too dogmatic and extreme a version when he says, "To judge of poets is only the faculty of poets." The critic has to place himself in the situation of the poet, he has to adjust his mental and spiritual vision to that of the poet in order to understand him adequately. The critic is the ideal reader who equipped with the qualities of training and culture sets out on an adventure in the realms of literature. He takes the words on the page and interprets them according to the genius of the language and the craft of the writer ; he takes the meaning of the writer and sets it against meaning of the words that make the piece of writing and weighs the achievements against the intention and evaluates both the achievement and the intention on the scale of literary perfection. He brings to his reading a taste refined and a judgement steadied by close study and wide experience of books. Literary criticism is, thus, only a systematic development of intelligent and adequate reading.

As already implied, the two functions of criticism—judgement

and appreciation—lead to an examination of the two opposed stand-points from which the world has looked at criticism—the Classical and the Romantic, or the Judicial and Impressionistic. The former is the older view, which began with the Renaissance and held sway until the time of Rousseau. The latter view then predominated, with the important exceptions of the works of Mathew Arnold, until it was attacked by the modern critics, T. S. Eliot, T. E. Hulme, I. A. Richards and F. R. Leavis. It was at its greatest strength at the beginning and at the end of the 19th century, appealing particularly to the poet-critics, Wordsworth, Swinburne, Oscar Wilde, and Arthur Symonds, but it still has powerful adherents to-day. The classical stand point (also called Dogmatic from its insistence on a uniform standard) laid particular emphasis on the judicial function of criticism, regulating it by the rules of ancient classics, as codified by Aristotle and his followers. It advocated right judgement as a step towards right enjoyment. Classical criticism dominated European thought in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, when Aristotle's Poetics based on the practice of Homer and the Athenian dramatists was acknowledged as the master key to the treasures of literature. Italy set the fashion, and France and England followed suit. "Aristotle", declared Scaliger, the famous critic of the 16th century, "is our emperor, the perpetual dictator of all the fine arts." Pope in his Essay on Criticism called on English writers to take their standards from the most ancient models :

"Be Homer's works your study and delight,  
Read them by day, and meditate by night ;  
Thence form your judgement, thence your maxims bring  
And trace the Muses upward to their spring."

This briefly, is what classical criticism stands for : judgement based on absolute standards and established conventions. It is scarcely necessary to point out how severely it restricts the free play of the critical faculty, just as the same doctrine for a long time fettered the imagination and technique of the creative writer.

With the French Revolution, criticism together with the rest of literature, began to shake off the shackles of classical authority. Among English authors Wordsworth was probably the first to recognise fully that a work of art carries with it its own canon of enjoyment independent of any outside aid, and that it has its own particular mode of expression, which it does not impose on anything else in the same genre. Thus criticism was now expected to ascertain the view point and intention of the writer if it proposed to assess a

work of art. In Carlyle's words, "its first and foremost duty is to make plain to itself what the poet's aim really and truly was, how the task he had to stand before his eye, and how far, with such materials as were afforded to him, he has fulfilled it." The doctrines of Aristotle simply do not enter into the matter. This is the Romantic view of criticism, from which has evolved, in recent times the conception of Impressionism or the pure enjoyment of literature as the highest exercise of the critical faculty. The Impressionistic or Appreciative criticism gives wings to the reader's spirit by showing him the pleasure which an experienced reader (the critic) has derived from the poem. What is implied in the long established tradition of acknowledging the critic to be a man of taste is that he is an epicurean in the field of literature, one who derives intense and refined enjoyment from the reading of books. He reads for pleasure and he writes to express and communicate to others the pleasure he has derived from books. Of necessity appreciative criticism throbs with emotion and is warmed by enthusiasm. The cool calculation, the subtle poise, the wise balance of some other forms of criticism is antipathetic to its nature. The response it registers are occasioned by the reading of a book, but they are more likely to conform to the nature of the reader than to the nature of what he has read. The book has suffered a sea-change, when it has been absorbed by the critic into his own consciousness and personality. It has become the critic's 'Hamlet' or 'Paradise Lost'; it has clothed itself in the colours of critic's imagination. To condemn appreciative criticism for being creative, emotive kind of writing is to condemn it for performing its proper function. It aims at making the reader interested in the book, stirring his curiosity and heightening his expectations; it reaches that aim by giving a glowing account of the pleasurable impression printed by the book on the mind of the critic. "Appreciative, impressionistic criticism takes a book by itself, enjoys it and admires it as a thing apart. It savours the sweets that lie compacted in a poem and rests for the time being in the poem's individual flavour. It has a childlike quality of living completely in the present moment, without looking before and after and pining for what is not, the quality cultivated by Pater's Marius the Epicurean."

(M. G. Bhate)

This form of criticism is essentially subjective. The critic is concerned only with expressing what he himself has felt in the presence of the work of art or literature that he is discussing. The last thing any good critic of this school will do would be to enforce



his observations by an appeal to accepted conventions or ancient authorities. He is not affected by what others have said about their own response to the same work, and a sensitive and penetrating critic may even cause his readers to see it, as it were, with new eyes, and invest it with qualities hitherto unrecognised, so that he almost creates a new work from the old. Appreciative criticism is in its purest form a poem on a poem like Keats's 'On Looking Into Chapman's Homer.' It is a lyrical, subjective form of writing. By its means the critic achieves self expression—not as a man of the world but as a man of the world of books. He is talking about himself as affected by the book, revealing his personality in the act of responding to a literary stimulus. "The good critics", says Anatole France, "is he who narrates the adventures of his soul among masterpieces of literature" Mr. France insists that a lecturer on literature, if he were really honest, instead of using the time-honoured exordium—"Gentlemen, I am going to speak to you to-day about Pascal, or Racine or Shakespeare", would rather begin his discourse with the words—"Gentleman, I am going to speak to you to-day about myself in relation to Pascal, or Racine, or Shakespeare." The critics of this school take up the position that, however much principles and criteria may be invoked whatever efforts may be made to eliminate the personal factor, all criticism is fundamentally subjective and impressionistic. Thus Mr. Andrew Lang declares that the only criticism worth reading is that which "narrates the adventures of an ingenious and educated mind in contact with masterpieces,"

Now the question arises what is the ultimate goal of literary criticism. Broadly speaking criticism may be regarded as having two different functions—that of interpretation and that of judgement. It is indeed true that in practice these two functions have until our own time been generally combined, since the majority of critics, while conceiving judgement to be the real end of all criticism, have freely employed interpretation as a means to that end. However, in recent times there have been critics who have maintained that the critic's main duty is exposition or interpretation, even if he ever warranted in venturing beyond exposition into questions of taste and valuation.

What is that the critic as interpreter should set out to accomplish? His task is both large and difficult. His purpose will be to penetrate to the heart of the book before him, to disengage its essential qualities of power and beauty; to distinguish between



what is temporary and what is permanent in it ; to analyse and formulate its meaning ; to elucidate by direct examination the artistic and moral principles which, whether the writer himself was conscious of them or not, have actually guided his labours. What is merely implicit in his author's work he will make explicit. He will exhibit the interrelations of its parts and the connection of the each with the whole. Thus, explaining, unfolding, illuminating, he will show us what the book really is—its content, its spirit, its art ; and this done, he will leave it to justify and appraise itself.

In the execution of his task such a critic will of course follow his own particular line of exposition. He may confine himself strictly to the book in hand, and fix his attention wholly upon what he finds there. He may elucidate it by systematic reference to other works of the same author. He may throw light upon it by from the outside by adopting the method of comparison and contrast. He may go further a field and seek his clue in the principles of historical interpretation. He may seek to explain a work of art in terms of social environment. He may also interpret a piece of writing in psychological terms ; to measure the extent to which it establishes a balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities and impulses in the mind of the reader or the writer. But whatever his plan, his one aim is to know, and to help us to know, the book in itself. He will pass no definite verdict upon it from the point of view of his taste, or any organised body of critical opinion.

An elaborate exaggerated statement of the aims and methods of the critic as the interpreter has been made by Prof. Moulton in his plea for a purely scientific kind of literary criticism. This scientific or "inductive criticism", as Prof. Moulton calls it, is independent of praise or blame, one that has nothing to do with merit, relative or absolute. As a scientist the inductive critic knows nothing about differences in degree, he knows only differences in kind. Contrasted literary methods—as, e. g., the method of Ben Jonson and that of Shakespeare in the drama—are considered by him, not as higher and lower, but simply as distinct, "in the same way in which a fern is distinct from a flower." Unlike the judicial critic he proceeds on the assumption that there are no fixed literary standards. For him the laws of literature are precisely what the laws of nature are for the natural scientist—not conditions superimposed from without, but "facts reduced to formulae". Thus the laws of Shakespearean Drama are not the

laws imposed by some external authority on Shakespeare, and for the obedience to which he is to be held responsible, but laws of dramatic practice derived from the analysis of his actual works. Thus, to sum up, "inductive criticism will examine literature in the spirit of pure investigation; looking for the laws of art in the practice of the artists, and treating art like the rest of nature as a thing of continuous development, which may thus be expected to fall, with each author and school, into varieties distinct in kind from one another, and each of which can be fully grasped only when examined with an attitude of mind adapted to the special variety without interference from without."

One conclusion emerges out clearly. There is a marked tendency in our time to regard interpretation as the chief, if not the only, end of the critic's task. There are some who reject the judicial criticism entirely and even those who believe in evaluation and judgement are impatient to escape from the narrow, inflexible methods of the older judicial schools. The modern critic is for the most part more anxious to understand and interpret than to distribute praise and blame, while the spirit of eclecticism which is one of the salient features of our age, and the evolutionary methods which are fast invading every department of thought, have combined to give him a breadth of outlook, a catholicity of comprehension and sympathy, a sense of change and growth, of personality and historic relationships, all of which were conspicuously lacking in the criticism of the older schools.

However valuable the results obtained by inductive, scientific criticism may be, we cannot agree with Prof. Moulton in his total rejection of the judicial criticism. The scientific critic of literature, let us remember the words of Moulton, has nothing to do with merit, relative or absolute. Differences of kind he knows, differences in degree he does not know. He seeks the laws and principles of a given body of literature within the work itself; having found them, he formulates them; but he has no opinion to pass upon them. The questions whether the criticism of life contained in Shakespearean drama is sound or unsound, and whether the artistic principles underlying its practice are good or bad, are questions which lie outside his field as a scientific investigator of the phenomena as they stand.

These questions and other allied questions are however legitimate and inevitable. We cannot evade them. For here, as it

must be evident, the parallel between literature and a natural science, collapses. Natural sciences like geology deal with phenomena which involve no element of personality, truth and falsehood, emotional power, artistic effects. Such elements and of the essence of literature which exists to interpret life under the forms of art and which, therefore, must be estimated by the quality both of the interpretation and of the art. In studying geology we inquire only what a given thing is and how it came to be what it is. We explain it and with the explanation our interest ends. In studying literature these inquiries lead straight to the further problem of the significance of the thing explained to us and to other people—to the problem of its human and technical merits and defects.

However much we may talk about the science of criticism, judgement in literature is universal. No one can read intelligently without forming some opinion about the value of what he reads. As we go further in our study of literature the problem of valuation necessarily becomes increasingly difficult and complex; more and more we find ourselves bound to reserve judgement where once we pronounced a dogmatic judgement, to reconsider where formerly we had assumed a view as final. The failure of the critics themselves to come to any agreement upon matters which seem fundamental often creates a mood of scepticism and even of disgust. But not for these reasons shall we ever be tempted to abandon the problem, or to adopt the wholly impartial and non-committal attitude of the scientific investigator. What the scientific critic gives us we shall always accept with gratitude; but we shall nonetheless turn to the judicial critic in the hope that he may complete the work of induction by helping us, on the basis of the results obtained, to distinguish between what is excellent in literature and what is not. Unless we take up the position that, as to the geologist all kinds of rock formations are of equal importance, so to us as scientific student of literature all kinds of literature are of equal importance—in which case Sheridan Knowles is as good as Shakespeare and it can hardly matter whether we spend our lives over masterpieces or trash—the great problem of literary values remains as urgent as ever. This being so; judicial criticism—the criticism which seeks to solve this problem—however numerous its past errors may have been, however certain the failures which in the future will continue to testify to the countless difficulties which beset its path—will thus have a place and a duty to perform.

Evaluative or judicial criticism seeks to arrive at a judgement

on the final, ultimate value or worthwhileness of a literary work of art in and for itself, as well as to determine its place and magnitude in the galaxy of literature. Such an inclusive, all round conception of the value of literature, a realisation that a poem is not just a beautiful pattern, that 'it means intensely and that it means good' radiates out of evaluative criticism. While it keeps itself in touch with the words on the page which build up the poem, it seeks to evaluate the poem by the quality of its interpretation of life. It neither mistakes literature for life nor does it take literature to be an escape from life. It knows that the literary artist must possess both an experiencing nature and an expressive art, an ability to use language at once for exploring life and for defining the results of that exploration. In evaluating literature it takes account of all the elements which, creatively mixed, form literature ; questions of rhythm and movement, 'thought and emotion, imagery and suggestion, words and meanings, philosophy and outlook on life are appropriately tackled by it in the process of final valuation.

"Evaluative criticism will, of course, take account of, and profit by, the findings of other forms of criticism. It will learn from the textual criticism to put a proper construction upon the words on the page, it will live through and live in terms of the poem, led by the hand by the Beatrice of appreciative criticism, it will use the method of comparative criticism for seeing the poem in the round and establishing with other poems and works of art. It will concentrate all the light that can be derived from the knowledge of literature; but it will go beyond literature to life, the origin and fountain of the light of knowledge, and place the mirrored image by the original, the reflection by the reflected. In the final estimation literature cannot be considered in isolation from life : it must show itself to be attuned to life, throbbing with the heartbeat of life. The superiority of 'Macbeth' to 'Sejarus', of 'The Divine Comedy' to 'Paradise Lost', of Wordsworth to Shelley and Keats to Tennyson is ultimately justifiable on the ground that one gives a deeper and more acceptable meaning to life than the other. It is not a matter of the glory of single passages and the splendour of isolated images ; it is a question of ultimate values—values for life, values in terms of life. With the answering of that question literary criticism has discharged its heavy responsibility, its ultimate function."

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## 2. Literature Should Reflect the Spirit of the Time

Literature is not a mere transcript of life, or reality, not a photographic representation but life seen through the perspective of the artist. Every writer has his own point of view to see life, and his reactions to it and his impressions of it are often radically divergent from those of other. Thus we pass from the book to the man behind the book. Literature is an expression of life, but it is even more the reflection of the personality of the literary artist.

Thus a true appreciation of a work of inevitable leads us to a study of its author's life and temperament, the influences that worked on him and the ideas and experience which shaped his outlook. What diverse influences finally go to mould an author's personality is a vast subject of study. One will have to know about the author's parentage, family traits, his domestic affairs, his social and financial circumstances, his predecessors and contemporaries in his field of literary work, the political and religious influences of his age and so on. In one word, it is necessary to know the characteristics of the age in which he lived. A writer is not an isolated fact, but the product of the age in which he lives and works. His picture of life is influenced, to a large extent, by the dominant influences of his age. Literature thus becomes not merely a reflection of the author's personality but a mirror of the spirit of the age in which it is produced. It is therefore that Arthur Anicimor, the famous Russian critic and poet, has remarked, "Literature should not live in an 'ivory tower'. It should participate in the people's movements and play its creative and constructive role." Literature, at bottom, is essentially a social institution. It is the progressive revelation, age by age, of a nation's mind and character.

The history of every nation can be conveniently divided into certain period which have common characteristics and common cultural and literary ideals. Every age has its *Zeitgeist* or Time-Spirit, which gives certain common characteristics to its people, their mode of thinking, their emotional reactions, their art and literature. No writer, howsoever great or small, can escape the influences of his age ; and while the manner of expression will vary greatly with the individuality of each writer, the dominant spirit of the hour, whatever that may be, will directly or indirectly reveal itself in the work. It is this which gives rise to the epochs of literary history



such as the Renaissance, the Augustan age, the Romantic Revival and so on.

Chaucer, the first great English poet was truly the social chronicler of his country at the end of the fourteenth century. The later half of the fourteenth century was a period of transition. The medieval characteristics, feudalism, and fanaticism, chivalry and romance still dominated man's thoughts and life. The age was medieval in its outward form; but underneath there was the leaven of new ideas and conceptions. The new spirit was expressing itself in the revolt against papal authority and in the growth of Parliament, in the newly gained power of the common man and in the new interest in Italian literature and art. Chaucer represents both the world, the medieval and the modern. He is a medieval among the moderns and a modern among the medievals. His works are a faithful representation of medieval beliefs, of its pilgrimages and the institution of chivalry, of feudal society and the prevalent conception about the universe. The modern note can be clearly discerned in his works, especially in his 'Canterbury Tales', in his sense of realism, the spirit of questioning, a sympathetic treatment of the common men, and in his stress on the joyous aspects of life. The whole age in its political, social and religious aspects is faithfully mirrored in his works. "The works of his contemporaries" says Legouis, "show the life of the century in fragments only; in Chaucer's pages the reflection is whole and complete".

The Renaissance represented an age of new awakening, a revival of learning, an era of unbounded enthusiasm and new adventures, a period of unprecedented achievement and glory in every sphere of life. Therefore intellect and imagination were alike aroused and stimulated in an unprecedented manner. The call of the sea and the spirit of daring and adventure are reflected amply in the literature of the period. "Without the voyagers Marlowe is inconceivable", says Prof. Raleigh. 'Tempest', 'Pericles', 'Merchant of Venice', 'Othello' are saturated with sea atmosphere. In 'Hamlet' the sea voyage of the Prince of Denmark is a turning point in the plot. Again, the Elizabethan literature is full of a sense of mystery and wonder, a daring and adventure, a curiosity and restlessness. The literary works of the age are marked by a fullness of imagination and vastness of conception, lofty idealism and the search of the infinite beauty, power, wealth and knowledge. The splendid passages of Shakespeare's plays; the love triangles of his stories, Lear raging against a storm, Hamlet following a ghost, Macbeth seeking

the witches, Faustus struggling against damnation, Spenser's Knight of the Red Cross fighting Orgoglio ; Sidney's picture of the ideal pastoral land, Moore's description of Utopian state, are creations of an imagination that had been liberated and set ablaze by Renaissance.

"Shakespeare", says Raleigh, "lived close to the earth and he imbibed his age so thoroughly that it automatically steeped into the fabric of his soul and bloomed forth into his writings. In fact, he has proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that a literature, which does not reflect the spirit of the time, cannot be true and great." He lived in an age of action and therefore at a time when drama was the most popular of literary form. He chose to express his vision of life chiefly through drama. Born in the age of Addison and Johnson, : he must have owned prose as the chief vehicle to express himself. Again, in his plays Shakespeare reflects the prevailing taste for melodrama, blood and thunder, adventure and heroism as also clownage and buffoonery to cater to the taste of the groundlings. The Elizabethan love of superstition, belief in ghosts and witches, fairies and nymphs is vividly reflected in his plays. Again, Shakespeare's treatment of love is essentially romantic and in sharp contrast to the picture of the sentiment in the plays of the Restoration dramatists, Etheredge, Shadwell and Congreve. In the works of these latter writers love loses its elevating character and is another name for filtration and intrigue. The reason is simple. Shakespeare's age was a period of noble idealism, while the Restoration society was reeking with cynicism, corruption, and clandestine love intrigues. It was impossible for Shakespeare to produce a comedy like 'The Ways of the World' just as Congreve was prevented by the spirit of his age, and the changed moral code, from writing elevating love drama of the order of 'As You Like It.'

The Augustan age, which followed this glorious epoch, saw the ebbing away of the zest and hope and enthusiasm which had filled the hearts of the Elizabethans. The later half of the 17th and the first half of the 18th centuries in England were a period of the supremacy of reason, balance, restraint and moderation on the one hand, and of town life, political squabbles, bitterness and party functions on the other. It was also the heyday of clubs and coffee houses in which the art of conversation and discussion was evolved. These characteristics of the age are reflected in literature in its lack of interest in nature, love of artificial gardens, development of prose literature, and production of satires, both personal and political.

'The Spectator', the 'Dunciad' the 'Rape of the Lock', and 'Mac Flecknoe' are essentially the products of this age, barren of idealism and emotion. 'The Rape of the Lock' could hardly have been born of the age which produced 'The Princess'. The eighteenth century was an age of refinement in manners, and polish and finish in literature. Writers strove to suppress emotion and enthusiasm and to use only precise and elegant expression.

The literature of the first half of the nineteenth century all over Europe stands in a class apart. A wave of Romanticism swept over the Continent and affected every European, who reacted to it according to his own racial characteristics. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Scott, Keats, Shelley, Byron and Leigh Hunt are highly individualistic poets and it is impossible to mix up the work of one with that of the other and yet all have the stamp of the age on their writings. Exuberance of passion and emotion, lofty idealism, sense of liberty, equality and fraternity engendered by the French Revolution, love of the beauties of nature, revolt against the established standards both in literature and social life, characterize the work of all these Romantics.

Tennyson, in the Victorian age, also illustrates that literature is the product of the age in which it is produced. He is truly Victorian. He is as much representative of his age as Chaucer is of the fourteenth century and Pope of the eighteenth century. His poetic art enshrines the very spirit—social, cultural and political—of the mid-nineteenth century. Through 'The Princess' he depicted the social status of the women of his age. Through his various poems he recorded the democratic spirit that had dawned after the Industrial Revolution.

Besides representing the democratic spirit of the age, Victorian literature was very much influenced by another factor of the age—the rapid advance of science. The age saw a sad withering away of faith and a paralysis of doubts gripped it. The implications of Darwin's ideas were so deep that no author could remain unaffected. The sea of Tennyson's mind was profoundly troubled under its apparent calm. The new science took away the faith of Clough and Thompson and caused a profound melancholy in Arnold. It forced Rossetti, Morris and Swinburne to seek refuge in an imaginary world and sent Fitzgerald to the arms of the "daughter of grapes" for consolation.

Russian writers of eminence, like Maxim Gorky, Razika Joe and Dostoevsky etc. through their various literary endeavours,

succeeded in capturing the spirit, temper and tendency of the age when the masses were completely dissatisfied with the tyrannies of the Czarist imperialism and had determined to challenge it boldly and vigorously. Books like 'Mother', 'Hunger' and 'Destruction' embodied this spirit of the masses. Leo Tolstoy, the prophet and literary hero of Russia, himself was the dynamo of the intellectual fervour that was inspiring the people of Russia in particular and the entire continent in general. His masterpiece 'War and Peace' may be called an intellectual epitome of his age.

The literature of the twentieth century possesses certain characteristics which are peculiar to this age. The audacious spirit of inquiry, impatience with Victorian prudery, freedom of the sexes, the role of science, particularly biology, psychology and psycho-analysis, the break up of family life and sanctity of marriage, the disillusionment caused by the two world wars, the rise of the common man leading to a socialistic pattern of society—these have revolutionized the spirit and form of literature.

Bernard Shaw, whom age cannot wither away, was the great interpreter of the spirit of his time. He had one and only one aim behind all his literary endeavours—to put before the world some of the gross abuses and artificialities of the time. For example, in his 'Arms and the man' he has tried to ridicule two most common and noteworthy aspects of the social life of the people of England before the 1st World War—romantic conception of war (on the part of men) and of love (on the part of women). Too much dreamy idealism had chilled the power of action of the people; they were living in a fool's paradise, of dream and utopia. Shaw, who was a practical realist, endeavoured, through, his works, to take them out of the chasm of dreamy idealism.

H. G. Wells and John Galsworthy, the two great pyramids of modern literature, always attempted to reflect some of the basic problems which they dared not face—the problem of looking into the activities of life through logical and scientific spectacle, the problem of moral and spiritual lethargy etc. H. G. Wells' novels act as an intellectual irritant on readers, ripping off the mask of self complacency, blind belief or irrational theories. Galsworthy champions the cause of the social underdog, while Arnold Bennett gives a new and refreshing realism.

The works of Aldous Huxley, D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce are the sincere manifestations of the spirit of modern age,



Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* gave a new presentation of sex and shook orthodox people. Obsession of sex is also mirrored in James Joyce's *'Ulysses'*. It is so much steeped in sex that it has sometimes been mistaken for pornographic literature. May Sinclair throws off pictures of thwarted sex, while Rebecca West's love stories are invariably turned into studies of sex perversion.

Modern literature faithfully reflects a sense of frustration and futility, of cynicism and disillusionment caused by the two world wars. D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley come foremost as scourgers and scavengers of society. Huxley reflects vividly, in his earlier novels, the utter frustration, pessimism and meaninglessness which overtook the people after the 1st World War. However, the best echo of the post-war age of disillusion and bitterness is heard in T. S. Eliot's *'The Waste Land'*. It is an epitome of the stagnant and timid temper of the period which followed the 1st World War. This poem is as characteristic of the twentieth century even as *'The Rape of the Lock'* is a mirror of the eighteenth century.

Modern literature also bears the stamp of recent developments in psychology and psycho-analysis. The impact of modern psychology has manifested itself especially in novel. It has become formless and the idea of a sustained plot, story and character become foreign to it. Owing to the influence of new psychology, especially psycho-analysis, with its emphasis on the unconscious and the sub-conscious novelists lose themselves in the complexities and subtleties of character. Modern psychological researches have shown that an individual is not a personality at all; he is merely a succession of fleeting persons, each of whom endures for a psychological moment. Hence the novelist concentrates on the fleeting psychological state or moment of experience; novel therefore becomes a succession of scenes. The best representation of this aspect is found in the monumental *'Ulysses'* which could never have been born in the age of Dickens or Hardy. Virginia Woolf also shares this attitude and her novels are formless, a picture of the stream of consciousness. Disregard of form is also found in the work of the continental writer Marcel Proust, the author of *'Remembrance of Things Past.'*

Modern literature also portrays the conflict between various political and economic ideologies which are responsible for contributing to frequent armed clashes. Reginald Gould's poem *'If War Shatters Thee'*, Havana Greeve's *'God of the Rich'*, Pinta Warbel's *'Labour Dine'* and many other modern pieces of poetry faithfully manifest the revolting spirit of the poor, starving, semi-naked



'Have-Nots' who are out to shatter the huge citadel of capitalism  
Bread is the only demand of the starving labourers.—

"All life moving to one measure,  
Daily bread and daily butter:  
Life of toil, life of sorrow,  
Hand to mouth and nothing tomorrow."

When all is said and done, it must be admitted that, if the work of a writer merely reflects the spirit of his times, it cannot be great literature. It will at best be a piece of valuable material for the sociologist and the historian. It would lack the virtue of permanence and universality. If it were so, the literature of the Greeks should not appeal to an Indian to-day. Similarly, Shakespeare, the Elizabethan, should not continue to exercise fascination even to-day. The essence of literature lies in the individual approach of the author, in his personality which will rise above all influences. It is thus that we cannot mistake a play of Shakespeare for that of Marlowe. Similarly, the poetry of Keats is distinct from that of Shelley, though both were contemporaries and shared the common romantic spirit of the age.

The author, it is true, is shaped by the spirit of the age but he also shapes it. A true man of letters is the creature as well as the creator of the age in which he lives. Thus we talk of the age of Shakespeare, the age of Pope, the age of Shaw and so on. Those critics and historians who see in literature only a process of social growth mistake the real point at issue. Thus the French critic, Taine, under-rated the element of personality in his 'Literary History of the British People'. He ignored the great truth that the genius of a man of letters always manages to transcend the bounds of race and country. Again, Milton's 'Paradise Lost' was a great challenge to the age of cynicism, low morals and satirical literature. Milton revolted against rather than represented the spirit of his times, and, despite all the propitious atmosphere of heroism, noble ideals and love of song and drama, the Elizabethan age could produce only one and not two Shakespeares. How it is done nobody can say. The fact is that no formula will elucidate, and no analysis explain the original, mysterious and incommunicable element of personal genius. It is this which gives an abiding and universal appeal to the work of a great writer. He is of his age and yet above it. This is what Ben Jonson meant when he paid the memorable tribute to Shakespeare that he was of his age and of all the ages.

## **Literature should Reflect the Spirit of the Time**

### **A Synopsis :—**

1. Literature is an expression of life, but it is even more the reflection of the personality of the literary artist. And the literary artist is, to a great extent, the product of his age. Thus literature becomes not merely a reflection of author's personality but a mirror of the spirit of the age in which it is, produced. It is, at bottom, a social institution.

2. Every age has its *Zeitgeist* or Time Spirit which will, directly or indirectly, reveal itself in the literature of the period. It is this which gives rise to epochs of literary history—the Renaissance, the Augustan age, the Victorian age etc.

3. Chaucer was the social chronicler of his country at the end of the fourteenth century. The whole age in its social, political and religious aspects is mirrored in his works.

4. The Elizabethan literature is full of a sense of mystery and wonder, daring and adventure; fullness of imagination and vastness of conception. Shakespeare is a true representative of his age. He lived in an age of action ; so he expressed his vision of life chiefly through drama. In his dramas he caters to the taste of his groundlings. His treatment of love is essentially romantic in keeping with the noble idealism of his age.

5. The special characteristics of the eighteenth century are reflected in its literature, in its lack of interest in nature, lack of emotion and enthusiasm, development of prose, production of satires.

6. The literature of the first half of the nineteenth century is characterized by exuberance of passion and emotion, lofty idealism, experimentation, love of the beauties of nature.

7. Tennyson is truly Victorian. His poetic art enshrines the very spirit—social, cultural and political—of the mid-nineteenth century. The atmosphere of doubt and despair engendered by the advancement of science colours the whole literature of the age.

8. The Russian writers like Gorky, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy succeeded in capturing the spirit of the age.

9. The literature of the twentieth century possesses certain characteristics which are peculiar to the age. The spirit of rational inquiry and realism is reflected in the works of Shaw, Galsworthy

and Bennett. Freedom of the sexes finds expression in the novels of D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, May Sinclair, Rebecca West etc. Lawrence, Huxley and Eliot mirror the sense of futility and frustration caused by the two world wars. The modern novel, specially the stream of consciousness novel, bears the stamp of recent developments in psychology. Modern literature also reflects the conflict between various political and economic ideologies.

10. A true man of letters is the creature as well as the creator of his age. The essence of true literature lies in the individual approach of the author. Those critics who see in literature only a process of social growth mistake the real point at issue. A great writer is of his age and yet above it.

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### 3. "To Judge of Poets is only the Faculty of Poets"

(Ben Jonson)

This observation of Seneca (echoed by Ben Jonson) has always been a controversial issue. Traditionally the critic of literature has always been regarded as belonging to a completely different order of beings from those who create it. According to this view creation and criticism are opposed, conflicting, mutually exclusive types of activity carried on by two distinctive types of minds. But there is also the counter view that criticism and creation are co-ordinate and complementary activities of a single type of mind, *viz*, the literary mind and, therefore, the creative writer is better qualified to discharge the critical function.

The theory of two distinct mental types is based partly on the facts of literary history and partly on the observed differences between the creative and critical processes. On the one hand it is pointed out that some great critics like Aristotle, Longinus, Dr. Johnson, I. A. Richards either did not try their hand at creative writing or did not attain distinction therein; on the other hand, it is noted that great creative writers like Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, Dickens, Hardy contributed little or nothing at all to literary criticism; and the conclusion is sought to be drawn that the two sorts of excellence, creative and critical, count each other out. The first thing to be done in the name of fairness is to compile a list of names esteemed in both spheres of activity. Dante, Ben Jonson, Dryden, Coleridge, Goethe, Arnold, T. S. Eliot make a bead-roll of writers who achieved distinction both in poetry and criticism. If so many were able to combine creative and critical powers of a high order, there cannot in the nature of things be anything anti-pathetic in the two types of activities. Nor was there in the careers of most of them a clear-cut division into a creative phase and a critical phase. Dryden's critical prefaces alternated with his creative works; Goethe's conversations with Eckermann coincided at least partly with the composition of the second part of 'Faust,' Coleridge indeed wrote the 'Biographia Literaria' long after the suspension of his "shaping spirit of imagination", but the seminal ideas of his criticism germinated in the spring time of his poetic career when he and the two Wordsworths eagerly discussed poetic problems during their fruitful rambles. Arnold undoubtedly is a crucial case: his creative work was practically over when he started

upon his 'Eassys in Criticism'. Of the critics mentioned in the first list, Dr. Johnson can be singled out for the poetic excellence of his 'London' and 'The Vanity of Human Wishes'. Of the writers in the second list, it need only be pointed out that Shakespeare gives us an illuminating account of poetic imagination in the well-known passage from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and a striking version of the theory of imitation in a passage from 'Hamlet'. Milton is suggestive on the matter of blank verse technique. Blake is challenging in his attack on Aristotelian principles and classical ideals. All that can be gathered from the cases of critics like Aristotle and Richards and of creative writers like Hardy is that creative and critical activities can exist independently of each other ; there is no evidence to support the theory of an antipathy between the two.

The correlated view that there is an alternation of creative and critical ages in the history of literature is equally unsound. It is usual to point to the Elizabethan age and Augustan age in English literature for a confirmation of this view. The Elizabethan renaissance was a flowering time of creative literature : the drama and the lyric in particular flourished with a brilliance they never attained later. But the critical literature of the age was scanty and unbalanced. On the other hand, the Augustan age was great and glorious in its critical achievements, but flat, stale and unprofitable in its creative literature. This view looks imposing in its large abstraction ; but it dissolves in a mirage on closer inspection. The English renaissance produced at least one great critic, Ben Jonson, who was also a great creative artist, and a number of talented critics like Sir Philip Sidney, Puttenham, Campion and Daniel who gave birth to English criticism and began to lick it into shape. Three of them were lyrical poets of rare charm and artistry. The Augustan age has to its credit one great poet, Pope, a number of estimable poets like Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson, a band of novelists, Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, who developed a new literary form and raised it to a high level of artistic attainment and great masters of literary prose like Swift, Addison, Gibbon, Burke and others. The age of the Romantic Revival, which succeeded the Augustan age, won new laurels in both the fields. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats (in his letters), Hazlitt, De Quincey Leigh Hunt and Charles Lamb are great critics as well as great creative artists. "A dispassionate study of literary history seems to point to the conclusion that creative and critical abilities flourish and fade together, a conclusion which appeals to commonsense. It stands to



reason that those who take the literary art seriously, who practise it and are eager to develop and perfect it are likely to judge the quality and value of works of that art more adequately and discriminatingly than those who know it at a distance and at second hand."

Those who believe in the theory of an antipathy between the creative and critical faculties seek support from an analysis of the creative and critical activities. Mr. Herbert Read has gone so far as to say. "The truth is rather that poetry and criticism are entirely different faculties; they are established on different grounds and have a different point of view. We might even venture the observation that the excellent poet is almost always an indifferent or at any rate an amateur critic." The exponents of this theory allot different compartments for the poet (used for the creative artist in general) and the critic and state that the aims and methods of both are poles apart. A poet is generally personal and subjective in his treatment of life, whereas a critic's good qualities are always in being impersonal, objective and dispassionately detached. Dr. Johnson is an illustration. His critical faculties were stifled by his religious and political prejudices and as a result many of his 'Lives' have not been to the mark. Macaulay is another example. He calls Boswell a great biographer because he was "a big fool" and stabs the soul of criticism. In the critic's compartment there is little room for personal, eccentric, whim-whams or the free play of prejudices and predilections. It is also suggested that the creative writer seeks to bring things together, the critic is accustomed to take things apart; the one is engaged upon problems of synthesis, the other upon those of analysis. The poet starts with a crowded mind and a blank page. Multitudinous impressions from different levels and eras of experience are bobbing up and down on the current of his consciousness. The problem for the poet is to get them astride words which, as T. S. Eliot says.

".....strain,  
Crack, and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place  
Will not stay still."

The poet with his 'esemplastic power' tries to effect a synthesis of the discordant and apparently incompatible elements of his experience, and thus to create a relatively stable order out of the chaos of his mental impressions. The critic, on the other hand,

does not have to soul his cuffs in the impurities of the unformed chaos. He has before him the rounded, perfected globe of the poem, the ordered pattern of words on the page, which he proceeds to decipher, to read and to judge in the light of other patterns and exemplars which are ready to his hand. His function mainly is that of the analytical intellect—viewing the different parts of a composition in relation to the central idea, elucidating the manner in which its style (including in the term diction, imagery, rhythm, stanzaic or other form) is harmonised with the intention of the poet, relating the leading idea to the poet's own life. This logic of different aims and methods drives a wedge between creative and critical writings and disables the expert in one line for good work in the other line.

But this contention does not stand the test of reason. "In literature as in other spheres of activity few can attain pre-eminence in all types of work. Even those who have the capacity to shine everywhere must make their choice and limit their ambition to some particular kind of excellence. A man will congratulate himself on having mastered the technique of a particular craft : he will be reluctant to dissipate his energy by dabbling in numerous trades. And yet, there is such a close affinity and bloodkinship between creative and critical writings that mastery in one kind should facilitate the attainment of mastery in the other. The multitudinous impressions which impel a poet to creative composition include impressions gathered from his vivid, vital and discerning study of the work of other poets. After all, the most original poet originates from his predecessors in the art of poetry, has watched them at work and has scrutinised their work, has felt and estimated its greatness and value. The higher his stature as a creative artist, the more critical he is likely to be of the artistry of his predecessors and exemplars, the more dissatisfied with their methods and achievements, the more eager to embark upon new experiments, and blaze out new orientations of his own. Critical discernment does not impede creativity but directs it along right lines. The counterpart of this theory should be equally acceptable. A critic sets out to interpret, to enjoy, to evaluate poetry : at each stage of his critical study, the experience of composing poetry, a personal knowledge of how it feels to write a poem will give him depth and balance, a sense of realities and an eye for genuine excellence. While it is broadly true that in some sense poets are born and critics are made, even a little poetic practice goes a long way in the making of a critic. It gives him an insight into the processes of the creative

mind, an inside knowledge of the aims and methods of the literary artist : an insight and knowledge which equip him to interpret correctly, appreciate discriminatingly and evaluate justly." (M. G. Bhate). It is an advantage that the poet critic enjoys upon the bachelor-critic (Critic who is not wedded to poetry). When these poet-critics add to their power of creation the gift of self analysis, their verdict upon the inner laws of poetry has the weight not of sound judgement alone but also of evidence.

A perfect appreciation of a poem is only possible to a reader who has adjusted his perception of life to the poet's perception. The objective work of art should call up as far as possible the same impressions which were in the artist's mind when he created it. The stuff of life itself which the poet's imagination played upon, and which was shaped by him into a poem—that poem being his construction of some of the elements of life—must reappear in the appreciative critic's mind, charged with the same or nearly the same impressions, enlivened by the same or nearly the same sensibility.

R. A. Scott-James compares the artist to a pioneer who has surveyed the jungle, cut a way through it, and laid down a track. The critic is like the inspector who goes over that finished track to test it. But the reader does not begin just where the writer does. The latter starts from life itself, or rather some tract of life. His awareness of it sorts itself into a form. He adds impressions to impressions, which enrich one another by amplifying the view, showing up striking relationships, subduing some element which should be slight, throwing forward another which should be conspicuous. He sees his end across the jungle, and has to get through to it. But at the last his work emerges, exhibited to whosoever will examine it, in the form of a word structure—the sole expression of all that he has laboured to create. From that word-structure the critic starts. He must go back over the road. And when he has travelled over it—over that finished way—he will come at last to that tract of life from which the author started. There at least, if there is to be understanding, author and critic must stand together on common ground.

It appears that the word of the critic is very near akin to that of the creative writer. If criticism in a certain sense is a science, it is also, as Sainte-Beuve says, "an art requiring a clever artist."—"Poetry can only be touched by a poet." As Coleridge insists the

critic should "judge in the same spirit in which the artist produced or ought to have produced." What the artist has been able to construct the critic must be able to reconstruct. The main difference is only this: the poet or the novelist finds his subject in the external life around him, or in some internal life experience; the critic finds his subject in other men's books, in the world of literature. In each case there follows a reconstruction, the first reconstructing impressions drawn from life, the other reconstructing impressions drawn from literature.

But the creative artist is freer. He may follow his vision wherever it leads him. The critic, in the intuition which he, too, must form, is free to diverge from that expressed in the work before him, or voluntarily acquiesce in it; but he is bound always to come back just to that fact—the thing that is the book before him—and compare the actual achievement there with the ideal achievement which his reconstruction suggests, examining the subject, the treatment, the technique and the spirit expressed. That poem, play or novel confronts him with a matter of fact. The scientific judgement must step in; whereupon the artist in the critic is displaced by the scientist, equipped with a bristling array of arguments to show why this poem, play, or novel deserves admiration or the reverse.

"The critic", says R. A. Scott James, "may be the quiet, just appreciator. He may be the interpreter, or the censor. He may be the artist, discoursing about himself and his kind. He may be the elucidator, affording clues to the language, or explaining ideas which the author has taken for granted. He may be the curious explorer. Or he may be the definer, who in declaring just what a work is gives it also its place in the succession or contemporaneity of ideas. He may be the constructive historian, who tells how the history of society has affected art, and the influence of art has modified society. He may be the literary propagandist eager to push the best that there is in literature either for the sake of literature or for the sake of humanity or both. But whichever of these he may be, there is one viewpoint at which he must always begin, and to which he must always return—that from which the man of letters, an artist, addresses himself with a single mind to the task of constructing life into an image which will convince us and delight. From this, the artist's point of view, he must never be far distant." Ben Jonson only



gave too dogmatic and extreme a version when he said, "To judge of poets is only the faculty of poets; and not of all poets, but the best."

**"To Judge of Poets is only the Faculty of Poets"**

(Ben Jonson)

### **A Brief Synopsis :—**

1. This observation has always been a controversial issue.
2. Those who think that creative and critical excellence count each other out base their logic on Aristotle, Longinus, Johnson and I. A. Richards, the eminent critics who did not achieve distinction in creative sphere, and on Shakespeare, Milton, Dickens, Hardy, the great creative writers who did not contribute anything to literary criticism. But this view does not stand the test of reason. We can only say that the creative and critical activities can exist independently of each other; there is no evidence to support the theory of an antipathy between the two. A list of names esteemed in both spheres of activity : Dante, Ben Jonson, Dryden, Coleridge, Goethe, Arnold, T. S. Eliot.
3. The view that there is a alternation of creative and critical ages in literary history is equally unfounded—illustrations from the Elizabethan age, the Augustan age, the age of Romanticism. A dispassionate study of literary history shows that creative and critical abilities flourish and fade together.
4. The exponents of the theory of antipathy between the creative and critical faculties seek support from an analysis of the creative and critical activities. A poet is generally subjective and personal in his treatment of life, whereas a critic's good qualities are always in being objective and detached. The creative writer is engaged upon the problems of synthesis, the critic upon those of analysis.
5. But this contention is not sound. Critical discernment does not impede creativity, but directs it along right lines. Similarly the function of the critic is facilitated by his personal experience of composing poetry.
6. A perfect appreciation of a poem is possible only to a reader who has adjusted his perception of life to the poet's perception. What the artist has been able to construct the critic must be able to reconstruct. There at least, author and critic must stand on common ground. In each case there follows a reconstruction, the



first reconstruction impressions drawn from life, the other reconstructing impression drawn from literature.

7. The critic compares the actual achievement (the book) with the ideal achievement which his reconstruction suggests. The scientific judgement must step in; whereupon the artist in the critic is displaced by the scientist.

8. Whatever may be the function and the aim of a critic, he must never be far distant from the artist's point of view. Ben Jonson only gave too dogmatic and extreme a version when he said. "To judge of poets is only the faculty of poets; and not of all poets, but the best."

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#### **4. The True Critic Will Dwell on Excellences Rather than On Imperfections"**

*(Addison)*

##### **Evolutionary process in the history of Criticism :—**

Like other arts, the art of criticism has undergone a process of evolution. Prof. I. A. Richards in his 'Principles of Literary Criticism' which he calls 'a machine to think with,' asserts a belief that the process will continue. The achievements of the 3000 A. D. critics, he says, will be of a height before which all our aesthetics and psychological values may look pale. Since Aristotle, the theories of the nature and function of literary criticism, as well as of the evaluatory criticism, have enormously developed. The history of its evolution is a record from its infantile undeveloped attitude to the most developed form of analytic description.

##### **The primitive and earliest form of Criticism: a Fault-finding:—**

It may sound strange but it is a patent truth that literary criticism made its debut with fault-finding. In common parlance criticism has always been regarded as synonymous with fault-finding. To criticize an action is usually to express disapproval of it, to be critical of a person's character is to reveal various undesirable aspects of it. Traditionally the literary critic has been thought of as a hanging judge who passes sentences of varying severity on poems and poets. It was by way of turning tables upon the critic that Ben Jonson said in one part of his 'Discoveries.' "But some will say, critics are a kind of thinkers, that make more faults than they mend ordinarily." The tradition of regarding the critic as a kind of detective and hanging judge rolled together is based upon the acerbities and acrimonies of literary controversies and critical judgments in the past. Criticism was a weapon in the warfare between the rival poets and playwrights; the purpose in view was to blackball an enemy rather than to arrive at an impartial and discriminating estimate of the literary value of a poem or a play. This primitive rather barbaric tendency which feeds upon the instinctive prejudices of men has never completely died out. In some form or the other it has lived and will live. Thus Greene's attacks on Marlowe and Shakespeare and the personalities of Nashe, Harvey, Lodge and the rest in the Elizabethan age were a characteristic exhibition of blackballing criticism. In 'The Frogs' of Aristophanes,

the rival tragedians, Aeschylus and Euripides, are engaged in a fault-finding match. Jeffrey's pouring out venom upon Wordsworth is also a glaring example of this mean tendency. Our wounds have not yet been healed up, of the pernicious and drastic homicide of Keats by these poisonous adders.

**Fault-finding as the indirect cause of true Criticism:—**

But it is also true, though paradoxically, that these fault finders have done a great service to the rise of genuine criticism. The noblest among them is Plato who had condemned poetry on social and moral grounds and had banished the children of Muse outside the boundary walls of his ideal Republic. But this relegation gave birth to a revolutionary genius like Aristotle whose achievements are enormous and who may rightly be acclaimed as the father of literary criticism. Aristotle's 'Poetics' may be regarded as an answer to the charges-levelled against poetry by Plato. Similarly, Sir Philip Sidney's 'Apology for Poetry' was provoked by Stephen Gosson's denunciations of poetry. Shelley's 'Defence of Poetry' came as a counterblast to Thomas Love Peacock's declamations against poetry. Again, the modern utilitarian scientists may be crowned with an indirect honour to have inspired I. A. Richard to write his 'Principles of Criticism.'

**From fault-finding to appreciation:—**

But this art underwent gradual sublimation. Fault-finding, when purged of its sting, resulted in dwelling upon and pointing out imperfections in works of art. Then came the way of judging and then the method of appreciation. This is the process of development of criticism through the gradual sublimation of man's barbaric instinct.

**The cult of dwelling upon the excellences:—**

Now, this present question is, *prima facie*, a noble proposition. It lays emphasis upon gleaning out the spots of beauty from the literary creations and leaving the blemishes remain undiscovered because they will do no good.

The statement, apparently, implies a function of appreciative criticism. According to the consensus of opinion the ultimate aim of all literature is to provide aesthetic pleasure. Aristotle, Horace, Longinus Sidney, Dryden, Wordsworth, Arnold, Pater, all agree with it. The critic's efforts should be united to facilitate the enjoyment of the reader which he gets from reading a book. Arnold impresses upon the critic the duty to point out the excellences in the

work of art in order to enable the reader "to have a clearer sense and a deeper enjoyment of what is truly excellent." This he suggests to perform by taking recourse to concrete examples, to take specimens of the highest quality of poetry and to demonstrate where in the poem in hand the qualities exist. Pater's criticism is so much impressed by his Epicurean ideals that at its best, it has remained a recreation of fragmentary nature, a hotch-potch of culled excellences.

### **Dangers of dwelling upon the excellences :—**

As, when stretched to the extreme, the method of pointing out the imperfections of a literary work ends in blackballings, so does this dwelling on excellences result in mutual admiration and sugary, the former is bad without the least doubt, but the latter is worse because it mars the very purpose of criticism. Criticism here degenerates into eulogy. If perchance certain predilections and prejudices come into play, then it may degenerate into an exaggeration flavouring of the ridiculous. 'The dangers of this tendency can be fully realised if we remember that much of contemporary reviewing and criticism has become a matter of logrolling, mutual admiration and sugary, inoffensive generalities. Swinburne's 'soft and goody goody' remarks on the poetry of Collins, Pater's song of the blind praise of the artists of the Italian Renaissance, and the indiscriminate eulogy of the deliberate vagueness and indistinctness of the poems of Eliot written before 'Ash Wednesday' by the reviewers of the twenties, are glaring illustrations of this sugary.

Then what is the way out? Is it a third one or a middle way? What after all is the true motive of criticism? And also what are the real offices of the critic?

### **The function of a critic: evaluation and judgement:—**

Hazlitt says, "It is a very good office one man does for another when he tells him the manner of his being pleased." But the critic has not been content with such a limited view of his functions. If Aristotle laid down certain seminal principles based upon his findings out of his experimental and inductive method, a whole host of his followers claim their status of law givers. Moreover, right from Aristotle himself the need for judgement has been felt by various critics. Hoarsce, Dr. Johnson and Mathew Arnold have realised this. "The ending end of criticism" it has been stressed "is to arrive at a definitive judgement on the final, ultimate value of a work of literary art in and for itself, as well as to determine its place and magnituded in the galaxy of literature." Shumaker also

insists upon the necessity of judgement in criticism. J. M. Murry as well as a critic of eminence like T. S. Eliot have seconded its importance, though Eliot sometimes deviates from this method to an analytic description alone. Mr. I. A. Richards emphasizes the same thing when he says that "to set up as a critic is to set up as a judge of values," though later on he recants this opinion in his essay upon Coleridge on the Imagination and sticks to only experiment and analysis.

**Can the work of evaluation be done without finding out imperfections ?**

Now a very relevant query can be raised, to decide whether the work of evaluation or judgement may at all be done without finding out imperfections in the art and technique and in so many other things pertaining to a literary work. Will not excellence do alone ? Or is the application of shades of paramount importance to enhance the glare of the object ?

It is a common practice in painting that to emphasize brightness upon a particular portion of a picture its suburb is shown in background shades of grey or black to present a contrast. So it is in music where high-pitched notes are juxtaposed with sober and low ones to enhance the effect of the former. To turn to literature, Browning recognizes the importance of evil besides good and glorifies failures which invite more efforts. Basing the logic upon this knowledge, it may be very safely asserted, though in a layman's syllogism, that if grey shades, put besides, add to the effect of brightness, and evil does the same to good, imperfections also, when juxtaposed beside excellence, will increase their charm, or if not so then at least facilitate their recognition.

**Both the imperfections and excellences have a place in true criticism :—**

Some conclusions can be drawn from the above discussion. Firstly, that the true spirit of criticism lies neither in heaping up of the excellences nor in accumulating remarks on the blemishes in a work of art. Secondly, that it dwells in where neither is deliberately left. The true criticism is there where the critic candidly and fearlessly evaluates the good to be good and the bad to be bad. Truth should be the only motto of a critic. The spade should be called a spade. The critic should possess the fabulous swan like faculty of separating water from milk. Detached and disinterested statements are the true treasure of literary criticism. We are proud



of having such invaluable treasure in the history of English criticism. Hazlitt's pronouncements on Chaucer and Spenser, appreciations of Coleridge and Arnold on Wordsworth and Eliot's appreciation of Donne are worthy evaluations indeed.

To sum up, true criticism is not merely a matter of appreciating the good points of a work, neglecting its dark side. Imperfections, if they are honestly brought out and the critic is not motivated by his personal prejudices against the artist, do not hamper the spirit of criticism. On the other hand they only join hands to effect a complete and formative evaluation. As a matter of fact, criticism that turns soft and goody goody is far more harmful to the cultivation of genuine literature than criticism which errs on the side of hardness and severity, provided that it is always disinterested and impersonal, dealing with the poem and not with the life and character of the man who has composed it. Good manners are undoubtedly useful as a lubricant in social relationships, but they should not make the critic feel awkward about exposing and commenting upon artistic faults and imperfections in the poems or plays which are being criticized. It is more important that the critic should confront the poet with the steep and thorny way to perfection, than that he should accompany him along the primrose path of dalliance.

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### “The True Critic Will Dwell on Excellences Rather than On Imperfections

(Addison)

#### A Brief Synopsis :—

1. Evolutionary process in the history of criticism :—The history of its evolution is a record from its infantile, blackballing attitude to the most developed form of analytic description.

2. The primitive and earliest form of criticism :—Criticism made is debit with fault finding.

3. Fault-finding as the indirect causes of true criticism :—The example of Plato, Stephen Gosson, Thomas Love Peacock and modern utilitarian scientists.

4. From fault-finding to appreciation—the process of development.

5. The cult of dwelling on the excellences :—Its justification.

6. Dangers of dwelling upon the excellences—criticism degenerates into eulogy—the example of Swinburne, Pater and modern reviewers.

7. The function of a critic : evaluation and judgement.

8. Can the work of evaluation be done without finding out imperfections ?

9. Both the imperfections and excellences have a place in true criticism : The true criticism is there where the critic fearlessly evaluates the good to be good and the bad to be bad.

10. Imperfections, if honestly brought out and if the critic is not motivated by his personal prejudices against the artist, do not hamper the spirit of criticism.

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## 5. Criticism in the Romantic Era

The year 1798, is a landmark in the history both of English poetry and of English criticism. It opens up practically new vistas leading to realms, untrodden by human imagination, to a wonderland, brilliantly lit by the arid flames of feeling and emotion. It inaugurates and unveils 'reason' and 'critical acumen' in the islands across the channel. The 'Lyrical Ballads' becomes atonce the revelation of the Divine Inspiration and a manifesto of critical learning. This joint effort is so sudden, so revolutionary in its spirit and contains so much novel illumination that it appears a miraculous work. The Prefaces of the 'Lyrical Ballads' enunciate an enthusiastic endeavour to rescue poetry and criticism from the diabolic clutch of the Hydra of the neo-classical ideals. They cry for a release from the tyranny of every rule imposed by authority ; pour forth contempt on the dogmatic, the orthodox and the conventional and finally effect a passionate toil to smash all fetters resulting by the sufferance from the oppression of the dead languages. Wordsworth and Coleridge, thus descend down with electric lamps in hands, shooting forth spiritual beams to dispel the stifling darkness of the pseudo-classical stage where the black magic was in full devilish play.

This drive to sweep all encumbrances away is the sequel of various centripetal forces converging and effecting jointly on the nucleus of the emancipation of reason. Rousseau's emphatic advocations of social and democratic impulse towards freedom, which led to the volcanic birth of the gigantic Revolution ; stirrings of criticism in Germany vibrated by the transcendentalism of Kant ; the assertion of supremacy of reason by Fichte and Schelling and the Time Spirit, and work cheek by jowl in the making of the soul of the Romantic criticism.

Here, then, is an assemblage for the first time in the history of English criticism of both the theorists and the judges, whom Prof. Saintsbury calls in a humorous vein as "generals without army" and "generals with army" respectively. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, on the one hand and Hazlitt, De Quincey. Lamb and Leigh Hunt on the other, followed by a band of minors filled with loath and indignation marshalling as a protest against the previous dictators appear on the scene atonce as if by magic.

In theory as well as in practice Wordsworth begins with the smashing of fetters. His aim is to find the best soil for the "essential passions". In eschewing artifice, he looks for simplicity. He thinks the problem is solved by the deliberate choice of the subjects from humble and rustic life. He found poets extravagantly preoccupied with the affairs of the nymphs and goddesses, of "lords and ladies gay". Why not portray the deep emotions of village girls and peasants? Further, Wordsworth eliminates the distinction between the language of "Prose and metrical composition". The stately and dignified medium he replaces by the language really spoken by the common men. Inspired by the romantic detestation for artifice he substitutes the neo-classical monotonous syllabic metre by an equivalent free in which number of syllables and accents are freely varied. The whole conception of poetry thus undergoes a change.

In his romantic detestation of artifice, Wordsworth commits himself to the doctrine of artlessness. "Poetry is spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." But we must remember that while Wordsworth, like other romantics, demands spontaneity, it is not that of a careless or thoughtless person. "Poems to which any value can be attached", he says, "were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply." The poet is a man of great sensibility whose mentality is already shaped, before the moment of inspiration, by deep and habitual reflection. The situation which is to affect him poignantly, awakening vivid emotion, would pass through the "intellectual lens" of his imagination to his fully prepared consciousness. It is in this crisis of mind when sensation is vivid, when the faculties are taut and keen, when the whole of the poet's being trembles at the perception of beauty in the world about him, that he has the moment of his highest experience :

".....the hour

Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower."

This state of awareness of spiritual significance in common things is for Wordsworth the consummation of poetic experience, the summum bonum of the poet's life. This is the characteristic romantic view.

Coleridge with equally intense fervour to do away with the 'Good sense', 'Taste', 'Rule' and 'Authority' of the "faulty elder poets" propagates very original notions and views on the theory and art of criticism. "Ultimate end of criticism" for him is "to

establish the principles of writing" and not "to furnish rules how to pass judgment on what has been written by others." His wizardry manipulates are rare work of genius. His 'Biographia Literaria' although a congregation of multihued dissertations on metaphysics and other shoots of learning, conceives in its womb principles of criticism of high quality. A thinker by nature, he delves deep into the mind of the poet and the very soul of poetry. Like Lessing, the critical genius he had "within himself the evidence of all rules."

In the 13th Chapter of 'Biographia Literaria' Coleridge propounds a very original theory of "esemplastic imagination," the great ordering principle. It is an agency which enables us both to discriminate and to order, to separate and to synthesize and thus make perception possible—without it we have only a collection of sense data. He bifurcates imagination into two categories, primary and secondary. The former is nothing but the "Prime Agent of all human Perception." The latter is only an echo of the former. The function of the secondary imagination is that it "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify." He calls this secondary imagination by various names, 'shaping spirit of imagination', "beautiful and beauty making power", etc. With Schelling Coleridge concludes that the conscious self must include the subject and the object, perceiver and the perceived, the knower and the known, the infinite and the finite, mind and matter. He brings about a reconciliation of the opposites by this unifying faculty of imagination, which operates as a link between the world of sense and the conceptual world of the understanding.

Starting from the broadest possible conception of poetry, as the "regulative idea of all the Fine Arts", he ventures on a preliminary definition. It is "the excitement of emotion for the purpose of immediate pleasure, through the medium of beauty." So Coleridge, like all the romantic poets and critics, stresses the necessity of feeling, or emotion or passion. And next, it is "for the purpose of immediate pleasure." Here pleasure is contrasted with truth which is the object of science. And it is "immediate" because it is derived from the experience solely in and for its own sake. A work of art may happen to be useful, moral, health-giving. But it is not for these results that it is pursued, or for any results other than the pleasure arising directly from it. Nor it is enough to set up pleasure as the purpose. It is pleasure arising "through the



medium of beauty." And beauty for Coleridge means unity, the wholeness of a living organism.

It will be a gross injustice to close the account of the theorists without a mention of Shelley, that "ineffectual angel". His 'Defence of Poetry' is originally a work dedicated to an ingenious defence of poetry against Thomas Love Peacock's declamations. Peacock's logic was that in an age of reason, knowledge and illumination of science poetry had outlived its usefulness, 'Defence of Poetry' is after the Sidney's fashion and puts forth grandiose claims viz. "Poetry is the record of the best and the happiest moments of the happiest and the best minds" or "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Furthermore, he devotes his pages to the proposition of pleasure as the chief aim of poetry, its relation with truth and morality and so on. More than any other romantic critic he presents the poet moving in a world of other-worldliness, creating things in the image of his own spirit, and man in the image of an abstract God. It is the feeling of ecstasy which he, like Wordsworth, values supremely; and the presence of that feeling is for him the sign of inspiration and truth.

Along with these, there is a whole host of intellectuals who engage their talents and geniuses to what David Daiches calls "practical criticism". Hazlitt, the foremost among them is, as Saintsbury remarks, "the greatest of the cockney critics". Having a touch of Rousseau in him, his mind is deeply impregnated with Romanticism and he has so much of insight and virility that Cazamian insists upon ranking him with the critics of life. His interpretations of the writers are striking in their fineness and felicity of perception. But unfortunately, when temperamental prejudices shake him he droops down even below rationality and ceases to be a critic. Sidney and Scott are the main instances of its effect. Entire ignorance of all literatures but his own, ignorance of mostly all the earlier minorities and inaccuracies in matters of fact, are some of his limitations. But they are harmless to him, because his intuition and his inner sympathy work a charm upon whomsoever they touch. His 'Lectures on the English Poets' and 'The English Conic Writers, are of high water mark. Dealt with his 'Richardsonian digression' his Chaucer and Spenser are the best. But Dryden, Collins and Shelley have not been very justly touched. His 'Lectures on the Restoration Comedy' is definitely of a consummate artistry and is an apex. On the other hand his 'Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth' is marked with that amorous quest of literary

beauty and rapturous enjoyment which are Hazlitt's great merits. The last of the main volumes is his 'Characters of Shakespeare's plays'. Desultory in character and less suggestive, these characters are valuable because, as Saintsbury puts, they "Came earlier in time. Though sometimes moody, self-contradictory, desultory and splenetic, Hazlitt possesses "a breadth of outlook" and "a catholicity of taste."

Lamb the critic has the complete paraphernalia of Lamb the essayist. With his numberless and prejudices and predilections, his genial temper, his broad-heartedness and impish humour, his critical writings always border upon the uncritical. But they are always greedily readable. Absence of fastidiousness and selection and free excursions into the alit land of heart rather than of mind mar the criticalness of his writings. He dislikes Shelley because he is 'unearthly' whereas Lamb himself is a great lover of everything earthly. His early letters written to Coleridge and Hazlitt, his 'Specimens of Dramatic Poets', his magnificent paper on 'The Tragedies of Shakespeare', 'Notes on the Garric Plays' and 'Miscellaneous Essays' are always marked by want of method and certainty, but are essentially delightful.

Leigh Hunt is another important figure. Most catholic of all, he diffuses in his critical works a pleasant sunny atmosphere and is always trustworthy. Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Johnson on the one hand and Milton, Shelley and Keats on the other, all have been touched with a sure and felicitous hand. Strangely enough he lauds the poetical qualities of Dryden who was butt of all other romanticists, whereas on the other hand his own contemporaries Coleridge, Shelley and Keats seem to unease him. In general 'Impressionism and Rulelessness' become his essential habits which always enhance the true merits of his critical faculties.

Next is the great opium-eater, De-Quincey. His volume 'The Lake Poets' is his best. It contains more familiar and precise pictures which testify to a keen penetration. His 'Keats' has remained unsatisfactory. Other works, "The Rhetoric' and 'The Style' are of lesser note. His essay on the Knocking of Gate in 'Macbeth' is superb. His greatest merit is in the philosophical side of criticism where he is rarely wrong, but other corners though peeped with shrewd and ingenious eyes do not possess an unerring accuracy.

This concise survey, then, confirms that the criticism in the Romantic era does not only swell in bulk, but contains

substantial treatises upon various elements, theoretical as well as practical, mainly impregnated with the qualities of heart. Protean in nature, it defies the quality, the kind, the Orthodox Rules of judging of the pseudo-classical criticism. It cannot be denied that this multifaced zest has resulted into something of a rulelessness, tentativeness and the Romantic criticism has lost that solidity, that rigid creed of the classicists which was the supporting pillar of the classical ideals.

Romantic criticism emphasizes the humanistic side of a poet and lays down that manner and not moral codes are the concern of literature. Treatment is now felt to be more important than the subject. It brings about a great innovation in the method of judgement. According to its critics the first requisite of a critic is that he should be capable of receiving impressions : the second that he should be able to express and impart them. Fault-finding is as far as possible avoided, Jeffery and Dennis are of course exceptions. But the Romantic critics are not always within their limitation walls. They have their own drawbacks. Having in common possession a sort of general feeling of irksomeness at the restraints of neoclassicism, a revolt against its perpetual taboos and restrictions, they shower sometimes uncritical and unjust scorn upon even the greatest of the departed school *viz.* Coleridge on Gibbon and Johnson, Hazlitt on Dryden and others on Pope. It is really sad. But some allowance has to be made to their violent urge for emancipation from the classical obsessions.

“The Romantics considered poetry a sort of sublime bird’s song given forth with unpremeditated art. But Dante said that poetry should be an “elaborate and painful tail.” Dante did not say that feeling and emotion and ecstasy come with pain and forethought. He, too, might have agreed that they come, unpremeditatedly, like the inconstant wind. But he did say that to transmute these into the language of art there must be pain, toil, elaboration .....Too much belief in divine assistance led the Romantics to neglect the fact that the poet has to sit down and face squarely the hardness of the beautiful, and address himself to the technical job of expressing his feeling in recognizable terms of life, giving objective form to his ideas.”

“There we have the weakness of the Romantic poets, to which their conscious theories led them. But these defects later generations could avoid. The gigantic positive achievement, which is inseparable from their theory, stands, a monument for ever. They

successfully maintained that poetry— or art— is the proper vehicle for the feelings. They declared once and for all that poetry could never be cleverness, never be prosody, never just correctness or the observation of rules. It can never be what the man with no “music in his soul” can judge by a foot-rule or a book of grammar. It can never be compassed by learning. It can never consist in conceits, or fancies, or artifice of any kind, and will never deserve its name if it does not express perceptions of life received with conviction. From all those ingenuities and insincerities they rescued poetry, if not for ever, at least until affected people arrived with the jargon of “Art for Art’s sake”, or still cleverer people who persuade us to accept fascinating jig-saw toys for poetry. The Romantics did not think it enough to astonish. They thought it necessary to ‘move’.”

(R. A. Scott-James)

The Romantics insisted on inspiration rather than on training as the secret of high artistic achievement and regarded originality novelty, development of new forms and a joy in adventuring upon untried experiments as the symptoms of the vitality of a literary tradition. Though the whole body of their critical writings is wanting in solidity, method and certainty, it is imbued with the qualities of heart, always bathed in the flash-lights emerging from their inner self, which gives to it a vivifying spark from its own inward and immortal fire. The Romantic critics were themselves inspired beings and they raised criticism to the level of a creative art, thus proving the truth of Ben Johnson’s observation : “To judge of poets is only the faculty of poets ; and not of all poets, but the best.”

## Criticism in the Romantic Era

### A Synopsis:—

1. The year 1798 opens a new chapter in the history of English poetry as well as of English criticism. The Prefaces of ‘Lyrical Ballads’ come as a revelation of a new creed.

2. The influences that go to make the soul of Romantic criticism—Rousseau emphatic advocations of democratic ideals, transcendentalism of Kant, the assertion of the supremacy of reason by Fichte and Schelling.

3. Wordsworth— He begins with the smashing of fetters. He takes the poetry back to simple subjects. He also eliminates the



distinction between the language of prose and metrical composition. The interpretation of his definition of poetry.

4. Coleridge :—In 'Biographia Literaria' he propounds a very original theory of "esemplastic imagination", the great ordering principle. It is an agency which enables us both to discriminate and to order, to separate and to synthesize and thus make perception possible. Interpretation of his definition of poetry : it is "the excitement of emotion for the purpose of immediate pleasure, through the medium of beauty."

5. Shelley is also one of the important theorists. His 'Defence of Poetry' is originally a work dedicated to an ingenious defence of poetry against Thomas Love Peacock's declamations. It is the feeling of ecstasy which he values supremely.

6. Among those who devoted their geniuses to practical criticism Hazlitt comes foremost. His interpretations of writers are striking in their fineness and felicity of perception. His main works are : 'Lectures on the English Poets', 'The English Comic Writers', 'Lectures on the Restoration Comedy' and 'Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth'.

7. Charles Lamb :—His critical writings are marked by want of method and certainty, broad heartedness and are always greedily readable.

8. Leigh Hunt :—He diffuses in his critical works a sunny atmosphere and is always trustworthy. Impressionism and rulelessness are his essential habits.

9. De Quincey :—His volume 'The Lake Poets' shows his keen power of penetration. His greatest merit is in the philosophical side of criticism.

10. Romantic criticism is mainly impregnated with the qualities of heart. It brings about an innovation. Fault-finding is avoided as far as possible. But the Romantic critics are not always within their limitation walls. Sometimes they are not just in their pronouncements on the neo-classical writers. They insist too much on inspiration. They rescued poetry from dead conventions, ingenuities and insincerities. The limitations of Romantic criticism—rulelessness, tentativeness and the lack of solidity.

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## 6. "Our Sweetest Songs Are Those That Tell of Saddest Thought"

*Shelley*

An apparent paradox ! How can a thing be sweet which is sad and vice versa ? It seems to be a sterner thesis to pronounce the friendship of the sweet with the sad.

Probably nobody knows what life really is, for everybody views it through his own glasses which may reflect the glow of joy or the gloom of sorrow. Nevertheless, it remains true that life is a mixed blend of joy as well as sorrow : there are both sunshine and dark shadows for us on this earth. That these two strains are equally matched is more than one can say. Yet, somehow sorrow and suffering appear to attract greater notice and leave a deeper and more abiding impression upon us than laughter or joy. Moments of happiness appear to be fleeting but the hours of sorrow appear to be interminably long. Laughter and merry-making, of course, do leave their marks on us, but the wounds inflicted by sorrow and bereavement leave indelible scars. This is probably the reason why life seems to have more shadows than bright spots.

Emotion of pleasure and of sadness are the two instinctive feelings of man. Which of these two provides a greater hand in the making of a sweet song, is the question.

Our lyric store abounds in songs born of a real and intense passion ; of a sensuousness, *e. g.*

"Drink to me only with thine eyes" (Ben Johnson).

Or

"Come into the garden Maud" (Tennyson)

Or

Of a more delicate nature,

There is a garden in her face

Where roses and white lillies blow." (Campion)

We have also free, frank, careless and lascivious lyrics like :—

"Drink today and drown all sorrow"

(Beaumont and Fletcher)

On its extreme we have the cynical lines of Donne :

"For God's sake, hold your tongue and let me love"

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The reader of these lines quoted above will at once feel exported into the realms of fanciful joy and may perhaps, remark that these lines taste all that is heaven on earth. He may jump with an unwearied list of exclamations. How sweet, How beautiful, How seductive and imposing thralldom on our hearts; what a charm, and a hypnotic magic do they possess ! etc. etc. And if perchance the beloved is close, he may invite "Dear, give me your waist" or "who will dance if not upon these lines" and a *lira tira* may follow.

Such sensuous and joyous songs definitely spur the emotions to their highest pitches, to brim them over out of hearts into merry making actions. They do have in them the hypnotic effect which relieves the reader from the toil, the drudgery and the fretful fever of the common day. But like the spell of the magic are not they short lived ? Do not these swollen bubbles of emotions burst out soon and mingle their lives into nothingness ? Our experience confirms that their spell is momentary and transient. Arnold rightly sang :

"Joy comes and goes  
Ebbs and flows  
Like the wave."

On the other hand when we listen clare sobbing.

"My friend forsake me like a memory lost  
I am the self consumer of my woes."

Or, When we witness Davidson calling upon his love,  
"Listen my love, my work is done  
And the winding sheets are revelled out."

Our hearts irresistibly break in our bosoms and then we bleed. Cowper's misery stricken state when he wept. "I tempest tossed and wrecked at last" unfurl its banner upon the kingdom of our hearts without the least subterfuge. Keats' "So haggard and woe begone" knight having a fading rose on his cheek wins out sympathy in no time, Wordsworth is the greatest singer of inner joy, as well as of the "joy in the widest commonality spread". Coleridge also sings of the "joy the sweet voice, joy the luminous cloud". But is it not that Wordsworth in "The Affliction of Margaret" and Coleridge in his 'Dejection, an Ode' are sweeter than they are in their joyous lyrics ? Shelley, the prince among the lyricists, called upon the "shadow-vested misery" and always kept her close to himself. Both knew each other like a sister and a brother. Our cords of the

ventricles (the so-called seat of love and feeling in the heart) are stretched to the point of breaking when we read the following lines :—

“Oh lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud  
I fall upon the thorns of life; I bleed.”

They catch us like the D. C. electric current. Tennyson is at the height of his lyrical inspiration when he sings not the enjoyment or fulfilment of the passion of love between man and woman but the wild regret of the continued existence in unfulfilment. His “Tears Idle Tears” is the lingering cry of a soul, pining for what is not, for some unfulfilled aspiration, some past disappointment, some broken dream, some unrealised ideal.\*

When the ecstasy of sorrow becomes the burden of the song it shakes the whole being of man who sings it. We may miss singing when we are elated with happy love and joy, but we do not get time to think and know why, when sadly brooding in the corner chair, eyes well up to wet the shirt, the handkerchief or the pillow, reflexively the heart intones an inarticulate and wordless music. Why a humming follows and the inside grief and pang begin to wear verbal garb. This takes place involuntarily, naturally and automatically. It is only when we put those words down on paper that we realise that we have really composed a poem. The same idea is revealed in Bachchan’s (a Hindi poet) tearful lines :—

“I wept, and burst out into tears,  
Them you have nicknamed as songs.”<sup>1</sup> (A translation)

The history of Sanskrit literature records how the song was born in the heart of the first poet when he heard shrill and heart rending crying of the fabulous she-bird, made on the relentless murder of her mate, by the fowler, while they were mating. Thus the very first poetry saw the light out of the ultimate feeling of pity and sympathy.<sup>2</sup>

\*“...song is the voice of desire  
A throne of the heart.” (Robert Bridges)

1 मैं रोया तुम कहते इसको गाना ।

मैं फूट पड़ा तुम कहते छंद बनाना ॥

2 वियोगी होगा पहला कवि आह से उपजा होगा गान ।

उमड़ कर आंखों से चुपचाप बही होगी कविता अनजान ॥

(सुमित्रानंदन पंत)

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Pain and grief have an intensity, a poignancy which penetrates the innermost recesses of the human heart. That is an experience which is not easily forgotten. Consequently the expression of sorrow and heartache in verse and song, painting and sculpture has a deeper and more lasting appeal. The greatest works of art—poetry or drama—have been inspired by the tragic emotions rather than by happy or comic sentiments. The bulk of love poetry all the world over is an echo of the agony and despair and bitterness of unrequited love rather than of the joy born of the consummation of love. The lover 'sighing like a furnace', the beloved bemoaning the inconstancy of men, the pangs of separation and the agony of the moments of waiting—these have been a vital source of the most poignant of love poetry in all ages. And it is the poetry which strangely enough comes nearer to men's bosoms though they might not always be prepared to experience the fiery ordeal of love themselves.

The other tragic emotions have also inspired undying literature. The tragedies of Shakespeare, rank higher than his comedies. 'Hamlet', the tragedy of excessive introspection and procrastination, is an unrivalled masterpiece, 'Macbeth', portraying the nemesis of ambition, arouses a much keener and quicker response than the comic and happy situations in 'As You Like It'. The murder of innocent Desdemona followed by the suicide of her lover and murderer have wrung the heart of all readers. We instinctively sympathise with the aged and raving Lear as he is turned out by his ungrateful daughters. Even in 'The Merchant of Venice', Shylock is a greater character than Portia or Bassanio, for his life is essentially tragic. He is "more sinned against than sinning." The tragic heroes of Shakespeare—Caesar, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Lear—all tower heads and shoulders above his comic characters like Puck, Falstaff and Gabe, or the happy heroines like Rosalind, Portia, Beatrice, or Viola. They strike a more responsive cord in the human heart.

The great art critics, Aristotle and Plato, gave the pride of place to tragedy in the scale of literary creations and described it as the reflection of the highest, the deepest and the noblest emotions. Even the greatness of the epics of Homer and Virgil rests largely on the tragic element in them. The tragedies of Sophocles and other ancient Greek and Roman writers have always been close to the heart of man. In our own country, the appeal of the epics like the 'Mahabharat' and the 'Ramayana' lies essentially in their tragic

character. The pathetic death of Dasarath at the exile of his beloved son, the lamentations of Sita during her detention in Ceylon, the grief of Rama at the grievous wound inflicted by Meghnad on Laxman, and finally the exile of Sita by Rama, form some of the most poignant chapters of the 'Ramayana'. Similarly, the 'Mahabharat' is replete with numerous tragic situations of the highest intensity. The studied insult to Draupdi by the Kaurvas in the open court, the wanderings of the Pandvas for ten years, the death of Abhimanyu are some relevant instances. Again, one of the greatest Sanskrit dramas Kalidas's *Shakuntla* is steeped in the most poignant tragic emotions associated with love. The folk songs and ballads and fragmentary epics of our country, glorifying the exploits of Prithvi Raj, Alah and Udal, Rana Pratap—all have a tragic ring which is the secret of their appeal.

Why does tragedy appeal more than comedy? Why are the saddest songs sweetest? Is it because man loves tears more than laughter, prefers suffering to joy? Now, it is clear that we do not prefer tears to laughter, unless we are born pessimists or weeping philosophers. In fact, it is just our eternal craving for happiness which makes us so sensitive to all that leads to frustration, discontent and misery. Man is ever anxious to make himself happy but he finds that his quest for this goal is hampered by all manners of obstacles and difficulties. Every lover pines for union with his beloved and yet it is well known that the prospects of a happy union are remote. Since such is the experience of humanity the expression of tragic emotion of our heart naturally finds an instantaneous echo in us.

There is another reason of the popularity of tragic literature. Great tragedies do not simply arouse poignant emotions in our heart, for if that were so, their final effect would be rather depressing. And yet not great tragedy is depressing. On the other hand, it has an elevating and purifying effect. The tragic poets succeed in purging us of our baser emotions and lifts us to a plane of emotional experience where we feel an indescribable exhilaration, a 'calm of mind with all passion spent.' The tragedies of Shakespeare, for instance, do not leave us bitter and frustrated, but rather elevated into a region where we see the justice of God's dispensation and resign ourselves to it. Shakespeare, Hardy, Conrad, Galsworthy, Premchand, Tolstoy—to mention only a few outstanding exponents of the tragic—have revealed in their own way that man suffers but he is by no means a puny and contemptible creature. He wrestles



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against his own passions, against adverse circumstances against a malignant fate, a hostile and cruel society, and it is in his titanic struggle that he achieves the end of his earthly existence and leaves a shining example for others who may have to face similar trials and ordeals. Tragedy reconciles us to our lot in life and gives added courage and strength to wage a ceaseless struggle against adversity. It is, therefore, this ennobling aspect of sad songs which makes them sweet to us.

The literature of joy, fun, comedy and laughter is really in a class apart. The fundamental difference is that comedy appeals essentially to the intellect, while tragedy wrings the heart. The reader heartily enjoys the fooleries of John Falstaff, Tony Lumpkin, Mrs. Malaprop, Mr. Micawber but it is a phase of temporary amusement. The appeal of comedy is limited to the intellectual plane or at best to the superficial and lighter emotions of our heart. What touches the deeper spring of human heart has naturally a greater appeal and more lasting value. Comedy is, so to say, of hour, tragedy for all time. The appeal of comedy is skin-deep, while tragedy goes down into the innermost depths of our being.

When Shelly wrote the famous lines "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts", he had, of course, in mind the terrible heartache of humanity 'the thousand ills that flesh is heir to.' This utterance in its immediate context presented a striking contrast between the perfect joy of the skylark and the unfathomable misery of human beings. But what he said in that context came to be an imperishable and profound reflection on art and literature. This line has today a meaning which Shelley probable never had in mind. And yet this is what makes the works of great poets immortal.

"Only an aching heart  
Conceives a changeless work of art."

(*W. B. Yeats*)

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**"Our Sweetest Songs Are Those  
That Tell of Saddest Thoughts."**

(*Shelley*)

**A Synopsis :—**

1. The statement seems to be a paradox.
2. Life is a mixed blend of joy as well as sorrow. But somehow sorrow and suffering appear to attract greater notice and leave a more abiding impression upon us than laughter or joy.

3. Emotion of pleasure or joys has inspired many sweet and charming lyrics. But the spell of such joyous songs is momentary and transient.

4. When some tragic emotion becomes the theme of a song our hearts irresistibly break in our bosoms and then we bleed.

5. History of literature shows that the very first poetry saw the light out of the ultimate feeling of pity and sympathy.

6. The expression of sorrow and heartache in verse or song, painting and sculpture has a deeper and more abiding appeal. The greatest works of art have been inspired by tragic emotions rather than by comic sentiments. The finest of the love poetry all over the world is an echo of the agony and despair of unrequited love rather than of the joy of the consummation of love.

7. The tragedies of Shakespeare rank higher than his comedies.

8. Aristotle gave to tragedy the pride of place in the scale of literary creations. The greatness of the great epics of Homer and Virgil rests largely on the tragic element in them. In our own country, the appeal of the epics like the 'Ramayana' and the 'Mahabharat' and of the great Sanskrit drama 'Shakuntla' lies essentially in their tragic character.

9. Why does tragedy appeal more than comedy? It is our eternal craving for happiness which makes us so sensitive to all that leads to frustration and misery.

10. Real tragedy does not depress us; it has an elevating and purifying effect. Tragedy reconciles us to our lot in life and gives added courage and strength to wage a struggle against adversity. It is this ennobling aspect of sad songs which makes them sweet to us.

11. Comedy appeals essentially to the intellect, while tragedy wrings the heart. The appeal of comedy is skin-deep, while tragedy goes down into the innermost depths of our being.

12. This immortal line of Shelley is an imperishable and profound reflection on art and literature.

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# **Literary Essays**

## **SEC. 5**

### **History of English Literature and Literary Forms**



## 1. Literature—Its Nature and Function

By literature we understand those imaginative types of writing in which all the resources of language and powers of words—logical and psychological, intellectual and emotional, literal and suggestive, are freely drawn upon for at once the exploration and expression of life as a man lives it, experiences its worthiness and weighs its values. Literature is the music which streams out of the attempts of man to attune himself on the keyboard of language.

What is the criterion of demarcation between books which in the literary sense are books and those which in the same sense are not? In many instances, however, there is no room for discussion. No body can call a Prospectus or a Railway Guide literature. On the other hand, nobody can challenge the place which is reserved in literature for the plays of Shakespeare and Kalidas. But as we reach the boundary line from both the ends we pass into a land of uncertainty. We come across the views of two extreme schools. Should we follow Charles Lamb who narrowed the conception of literature to such an extent that he excluded the works of Hume and Gibbon? Or, should we accept the view of Hallam who, under the general head of literature, included Medicine, Theology and Jurisprudence? Where is the golden mean to be found? To have an accurate and sufficiently broad conception of literature we should take into account two considerations. Literature is composed of those books and of those books only, which, in the first place, by reason of their subject-matter and their mode of treating it, are of general human interest; and in which, in the second place, the element of form and pleasure which form gives are to be regarded as essential. A piece of literature differs from a specialised treatise on Astronomy, Physics, Agriculture, or even History, in part, because it appeals not to a particular class of readers only, but to all men and women as men and women; and in part because, while the object of the treatise is simple to impart knowledge, one ideal end of the piece of literature, whether it also imparts knowledge or not, is to yield aesthetic satisfaction by the manner in which it handles its theme.

De Quincey has beautifully cleared the distinction in dividing literature into two broad forms. "There is, first, [the literature of



knowledge ; and, secondly, the literature of power. The function of the first is—to teach ; the function of the second is—to move : the first is a rudder ; the second, an oar or a sail. The first speaks ultimately, the mere discursive understanding ; the second speaks ultimately, it may happen, to the higher understanding or reason, but always through affections of pleasure and sympathy.”

Why do we care for literature ? We care literature primarily on account of its deep and lasting human significance. A great book grows directly out of life ; in reading it we are brought into large, close, and fresh relations with life. What George Eliot said of art in general is particularly true of literature. “It is the nearest thing to life ; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow men beyond the bounds of our personal lot.” It provides us an opportunity of coming into contact with those mighty minds who extended the boundaries of human experience by their fresh vision and keen power of observation.” “Behind every book is a man ; behind the man is the race ; and behind the race are the natural and social environments whose influence is unconsciously reflected ? Literature finds expressions in books—books which are the chosen depositories of the thoughts, the visions and the aspirations of mighty intellects ; like wondrous mirrors that have caught and fixed bright images of souls that have passed away ; like magic lyres, whose masters bequeathed them to the world, and which yet, of themselves, ring with unforgotten music, while the hands that touched their chords have crumbled into dust. Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they thought and felt about those aspects of which have the most immediate and enduring significance for all of us. It is, thus, fundamentally, the expression of life through the medium of language.

To say that literature grows directly out of life is of course to say that it is in life itself that we have to seek the sources of literature or, in other words, the impulses which have given birth to the various forms of literary expression. According to Hudson the great impulses behind literature may broadly be grouped under four heads : (1) Our desire for self expression ; (2) Our interest in people and their doings ; (3) our interest in the world of reality in which we live, and in the world of imagination which we conjure into existence ; and (4) our love of form as form. To have an approximately complete idea of the basis of division of literature into different forms, we should consider not only the impulses, which

produce literature but also the subjects with which it deals. For practical purposes the subjects of literature may roughly be arranged into five groups : (1) The personal experience of the individual as the individual—the things which make up the sum total of his private life, outer and inner ; (2) the experiences of man as man—those great common questions of life and death, sin and destiny, God man's relation with God, the hope of the race here and hereafter, and the like—which transcend the limit of personal lot, and belong to the race as a whole ; (3) the relation of the individual with his fellows, or the entire social world, with all its activities and problems ; (4) the external world of nature, and our relations with this ; and (5) man's own efforts to create and express under the various forms of literature and art.

Taking into consideration the various impulses which produce literature and its subjects we get a fairly comprehensive scheme of the classification of literature. We have, first, the literature of self-expression, which includes the essay, aesthetic, appreciative criticism, and the different kinds of lyric poetry. We have, secondly, the literature in which the writer, instead of going down into himself goes out of himself into the world of external human life and activity ; and this includes biography, the ballad and the epic, the story, the novel and the drama. And, thirdly, we have the literature of description, comprising the book of travel, the descriptive essay and the poem. However, it is only a tentative division. As the impulses of literature and its subjects merge together in life, so they will merge together in literature, with the result that the different divisions of literature will inevitably overlap.

Here it should also be noted that in all the divisions of literature certain elements of composition are always present. There is in the first place, of course, the elements furnished by life itself, which constitute the raw material of any piece of literature—poem, essay, drama, novel. Then there are the elements contributed by the author in his fashioning of such raw material into this or that form of literary art. These may be roughly tabulated under four heads. First, there is the intellectual element—the thought which the writer brings to bear upon his subject, and which he expresses brings to bear upon his subject, and which he expresses in his work. Secondly, there is the emotional element—the feeling which his subject arouses in him, and which in turn he desires to stimulate in us. Thirdly, there is the element of imagination, which is really the faculty of strong and intense vision, and by the exercise

of which he quickens the similar power of vision in us. These elements combine to furnish the substance and the life of literature. But however rich may be the materials yielded by experience, however strong may be the writer's thought, feeling and imagination in dealing with them, another factor is wanting before his work can be completed. The given matter has to be moulded and fashioned in accordance with the principles of order, symmetry, beauty, effectiveness ; and thus we have the fourth element in literature—the technical element, or the element of composition and style.

If literature be at bottom an expression of life, and if it be by virtue of the life which it expresses that it makes its special appeal, then the ultimate secret of its interest must be sought in its essentially personal character. Literature, according to Mathew Arnold's much discussed definition is a "criticism of life"; but this can mean only that it is an interpretation of life as life shapes itself in the mind of the interpreter. The French epigram hits the nail on the head—"Art is life seen through a temperament", for the mirror which the artist holds up to the world about him is of necessity the mirror of his own personality.

A great book is born of the brain and the heart of its author, he has put himself into its pages ; they partake his life, and are instinct with his individuality. "Personal experience", it has been rightly said, "is the basis of all true literature." A great book owes its greatness in the first instance to the greatness of the personality which gave it life ; for what we call genius is only another name for freshness and originality of outlook upon the world, of insight, and of thought. The mark of a really great book is that it has something fresh and original to say, and that it says this in a fresh and independent way. It is the utterance of one who has himself been close to those aspects of life of which he speaks, who has looked at them with his own eyes, who by the keenness of his vision has seen more deeply into things, and by the strength of his genius has apprehended their meaning more powerfully than the common race of man ; and who in addition has the artist's wonderful faculty of making us feel and see with him. "A good book" says Milton, "is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life."

Literature, in the words of Shakespeare, is a mirror held up to nature, *i. e.*, a reflection of life. But what literature presents is

not a mere transcription of reality, not a photographic representation, but reality as seen through the mental and emotional lens of the artist. Art is man added to nature (Reality). The Camera is a dead, mindless and emotionless machine and so it reproduces mechanically, without any selection or rejection, whatever is exposed to its lens. Not so is the mind of the artist. The artist has his own imaginative and emotional reactions which he expresses in his work. Literature is representation not of the objective fact, of reality, but of the artist's response to it. The same object arouses different reactions in the different artists. The reason for these divergent reactions to one and the same object is that art does not represent the purely external aspect of an object or event but the impressions produced upon the mind of the artist by them. Thus art is an imaginative representations of life or reality. "Art is the representation of the real in its mental aspect."

(W. B. Worsfold)

Literature is a form of artistic creation and as such it is both a criticism and an idealization of life. A literary artist is not a record of gramophone ; he is a warbler who soars and sings—sings and soars in search of beauty and bliss. Literature is not just a mirror in which you can see your beautiful or ugly face. If evils and ugliness are mirrored in literature, it will have an adverse effect on its readers. No reader would like to find the same carking cares and corroding anxieties, the same sorrows and tears, the same misery and humiliations in literature as he sees in actual life. For a while he wants to forget "the weariness, the fever and the fret" of life, and wander in "faery lands forlorn." Literature enables to escape from the stark realities of life. It makes him play truant with the present world and run away to live a while in the pleasant realm of poetry. "A good deal of romantic literature employs the magic and music of language for the creation of a dream-world, the building up of an ivory tower insulated and cut off from this earth "where men sit and hear each other groan." It is the literature of escape from life, of wish-fulfilment and make-belief, indulging in us a forgetfulness which dislimns the realities of life. There is undoubtedly a place for this kind of literature in the scheme of human culture. The depressing realisation which paralyses Hamlet—

"How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable  
Seem to me all the uses of this world !"

the nightmare vision of man as 'nasty, mean, brutish and short'



which demented surft. would fling us into the valley of the shadow of Death unless the gleam of the ideal—

“For ever will thou love, and she be fair !” beckoned us to hope and heroic effort. As Bacon puts it in his pregnant phrase, “It (*i. e.* Poesy) doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shows of the things to the desires of the mind.” A ranged conception of literature would include both a familiarity with the dark and stark realities as well as the capacity to catch the visionary gleam and a passage from the one to the other. (*M. G. Bhate*)

But one cannot deceive oneself for long in imagination. Even Keats had to confess that art could not delude the senses for long.

“The fancy cannot cheat so well  
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf !”

Robert Lynd beautifully expresses the idea when he says, “There are critics who hold that it is enough to say that art offers us an escape from life. Art, however, offers us not only an escape from life, but an escape into life, and the first escape is of importance only if it leads to the latter.”

An addiction to the remantic habit of blowing bubble worlds of fancy is fatal to the creative art of literature. While it is true that the world to which Lear or Macbeth belongs is not a part nor yet a copy of the real world, it must be remembered that the value of Shakespeare's tragedies derives from the reader's conviction that Shakespeare has illuminated the dark places of human nature and revealed some of the secrets of the real world. Thus Macbeth is an exploration of the infinite possibilities of human nature and human life. There is on the one hand the vision of spotless purity and kingly grace that is Duncan, and on the other hand the martte-hearted witch crying out “All the perfume of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.” Above all, there is Macbeth who goaded by his ambition commits the crime of regicide, bears the extreme mental and spiritual anguish and to whom life appears “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury and signifying.” These are not airy nothings, not just verbal filigree work : they are of the flesh and blood of veined humanity, they define and reveal man's spiritual malaise — than ailest here and here.’ Created out of linguistic material, built out of words, they have the power of transporting the reader beyond the words into “the life of things”. The created work of art must in some



sense be true to life; it must be at once a vision and an interpretation of life, 'an escape into life.'

Stalin once called the writers 'the engineers of human soul.' To deserve that title, they should, first of all, try to understand life as to be able to depict it truthfully in work of art. This truthfulness, this sense of objective reality, or historical correctness should be combined with a vision of the future society. They should, that is, keep their feet firmly planted on the earth, but they should aim at reconstructing society in the light of a special ideology.

Man is a social unit, and literature being the creation of man, must have its roots extending far into the social fabric. Excessive individualism, as Maxim Gorky said, breeds only "superfluous people." Creative or progressive writers must banish severely dreams and fantasies; they should join hand with the toiling millions, and try to understand their mad howl for bread, their desperate struggle to be treated as human beings and not merely as worms. Psychologically also, a creative genius cannot live in a state of self-hypnotism when the mad cries of hunger and rapine are rending the air around him. They are bound to impress upon the hyper-sensitive plate of his mental camera. We are reminded of the famous lines of W. B. Yeats :

All things uncomely and broken  
All things worn out and old;  
The cry of the child by a road way,  
The creak if a humbering cart,  
The heavy steps of ploughman,  
Splashing the wintry mould,  
Are wronging your image that blossom  
A rose in the deeps of my heart.

No literary artist can, therefore, ignore the misery prevailing in society. But the crux of the question is, whether his sole function is to give voice to the immediate sorrows and sufferings of society or to rise above them and fulfil his native mission of higher creation transcending the bounds of time and place. To quote Romain Rolland, "The first and the paramount duty of the artist and the intellectual is to be true of his inner call and urge—sleeplessly : he must above all keep the lamp burning in the shrine of inner perceptions—and must create whenever his demon goads him to. This surplus time and energy he may devote to the betterment of social conditions, as Goethe did."

But to-day these values are being discarded. The function of literature has become to express the immediate hopes and aspirations of society, of the down-trodden and the under-dog. The literary persons, like the ruling demagogue, propose the same objects, the liberty and enrichment of the people, and good life for the masses. The result of all this is that recent literature, with all its freshness, its living interest and vitality, is becoming more and more a vehicle of social propaganda. No better example of this tendency can be found than in the enormous growth of journalism and in the rebirth of drama. There are few better rostrums for preaching than the editorial table and the stage. Without denying literary qualities to modern drama and journalism, it will have to be accepted that their chief claim to attention lies in their forceful preaching qualities. Most of the foremost writers of to-day are primarily preachers and propagandists. What will be the fate of such literature after a generation or two—is for the posterity to see. But we fear if it becomes true what Frank Harris wrote about G. B. Shaw :

“Fifty years later, the Encyclopaedia will read : Bernard Shaw—a marvellous statue by Rodin, otherwise unknown.”

We know that taste in literature change; they change in fact with exceptional violence and speed. Every generation, and at least the more excitable element in every generation, conscientiously stones the prophets of its fathers. But even then underneath all these changes of fashion, there are some permanent values which with some slight and temporary divagations remain somewhere at the heart of all ages. What we want to emphasize is that literature should not be a vehicle of conscious propaganda, of imparting instructions and moral sermons.

Literature should not be written with an avowedly didactic purpose. Great literature is absorbed in the great moral issues of life, it offers a profound analysis of them, and yet it is not didactic in the usual sense of the terms. “The plays of Shakespeare probe human nature and human life to a depth and a thoroughness which give them a rich moral significance. Nobody, however, will ascribe to them a didactic purpose. They explore the infinite possibilities of experience and quicken at every point the perceptive and discriminative powers of the reader. They reveal the complexities which must be taken account of in any

responsible effort to gauge the ultimate values of life. Literature matters because in some sense it is a revelation of life. Instruction, didacticism suggests a cocksureness, a downright authoritarian laying down of law, a dogmatic narrowness and driving at practice which are alien to the spirit of literature. It is tentative and exploratory; while realising some of the possibilities of human life it keeps an open mind regarding other possibilities—might-have-been. It undoubtedly teaches us many things about life and about ourselves, but usually it is not motivated by a desire to import instruction. It is instructive because it is the lovingly perfected creation of men who want to express through it their own absorbing interest in life, their pungent but contemplative response to life."

While defining the function of literature Mathew Arnold pertinently points out that it is basically a "criticism of life." That literature is not a matter of blowing iridescent bubbles of artistic design, that it is not merely verbal filigree work, that its significance depends upon the seriousness with which it deals with some aspects of life, that in some sense it interprets life—this is the general impression which is sought to be conveyed by the phrase "criticism of life".

The pattern of words on the page matters because it is an attempt to draw out the pattern of tangled experience. The poem or the novel is not life but what the artist makes of life, his idea of life. It may look like a "slice of life", it may be 'symbol', it may be a 'tale which holdeth children from play and old men from the chimney corner', it may 'submit the shows of things to the desires of mind'; but it will always be sharpening and refining our sense of what is worthwhile in experience, it will always engage us on the problem of the values of life : in fact it will never cease to be a 'criticism of life'. It is this preoccupation of literature with the meaning of life which the traditional critics seek to express by demanding loftiness of substance from great poetry. What they mean is that the poet should not be bemused by the magic and music of words, that he should not desert his intellectual function and go off into a gush emotionality :—

"We are the music-makers  
And we are the dreamers of dreams,  
Wandering by law sea-breakers,  
And sitting by desolate streams ;  
World losers and world forsakers,  
On whom the pale moon gleams."

If literature has a responsible function in the modern world, a function unrelated to the huge commercial success of the thrillers and the best-sellers, it can only be considered in the terms of a critical concern for human values. "Literature seeks on the one hand to preserve the integrity of the specifically human experience and human consciousness against the fissiparous pressure of the aggressive specialisms—that is why it is the chief of the humanities—and on the other hand to deepen the experience and inform the consciousness by all that the specialisms have to offer in the way of the enrichment of human value. It is in fact the most valuable as it should be the most vital element in the tradition of human culture which is the tradition of man's efforts down the centuries to harmonize and harness to his own purposes the various currents of life.....his unending struggle, not merely for survival or power, but for the attainment of an ideal of humanity. And the more various and conflicting the currents the greater is the need for the kind of critical placing and adjustment of experience and values which is the main function of literature." (M.G. Bhate)

Literature, thus, purports to record our highest effort at understanding the meaning of life and it unites the world of mankind by showing the commonality of ideals and the community of ideas that are one and the same in all mankind. In that lies the secret of its appeal to the highest as well as the lowest of our race, it appeals to the human side of all of us irrespective of national and geographical limits of this earth. Human nature is one and the same in its fundamental likes and dislikes and hence literature by giving expression to this community of ideas, performs the divine function of intensifying our consciousness of human unity, of giving scope and meaning to our scattered experience and of making life more beautiful by pointing out its harmony in its diversity.

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## **2. French Revolution and its Impact on English Literature**

*(Agra University 1959)*

French Revolution was an epoch-making event in the history of mankind. It revolutionized every department of man's activities. It had far-reaching consequences not only in the political, social and economic spheres of life but it proved a landmark in the literary history of the continent.

The background to English Romantic Movement was furnished by the French Revolution as a historical event and by a revolutionary philosophy as an ideology. The Elizabethan imagination was set afire by the Renaissance. The imagination of the Romantics was set ablaze by the French Revolution. They felt as if they were living in the twilight of a new dawn in human history. Just as the earth and the sky wore a new aspect for the Elizabethans, the whole atmosphere seemed changed to the Romantic as a result of the event of July 14, 1789. For them it heralded the beginning of a new era, of a golden age for mankind. The sun, the moon, the stars, the sky, nature, man, and human nature itself assumed a aspect, as the bell of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality tolled from Hotel de Ville in Paris.

"The Republic was in man's minds twenty years before it was established," said Theodore Watts Danton. Long before the fateful meeting of the Estate Generals the philosophers Voltaire, Rousseau and Montesque had exposed the hollowness of ancient regime, the injustice of privilege, the misery for which the nobles was responsible, and the inequality for which the caste and rank were responsible. To Authority, Rank and Privilege, the triple basis of ancient regime, the philosophers proposed Liberty. Equality and Fraternity. From a remote corner in Switzerland Voltaire relentlessly ridiculed to sham religion, the hypocritical faith and the meaningless existenc of the Church in France. "Man is born free but is everywhere in chains," declared Rousseau. The sentence was a token of challeng to the old order,



French Revolution had several aspects and phases. But out of the welter of conflicting aims and ideas, movements and counter movements one can disentangle its main ideas. The main idea of Revolution was equality. Mankind was conceived of as one brotherhood. The essential oneness of man in all countries and climates was realised. Every member of this brotherhood of mankind has an equal right to freedom from oppression, to happiness and to equality of opportunity. All divisions, classes and differences made by birth, rank, wealth, power and nationalities should be completely swept aside as irrational.

This is a note which has gone on sounding in English literature from time to time. This idea was already present in Cowper, Crabbe, Goldsmith and Burns. But it was French Revolution that gave it a clear and definite shape. Wordsworth and Coleridge with the beginning of their career sympathised with France and denounced England for the crime of war against the young Republic. When they attacked Napoleon, they attacked him not because he was at war with England, but because he strove to enslave other nations to France, because he was at war with the principle that 'the love of man was a higher love than the love of country.' Byron repudiated the insularity of England and died for another country than his own. Shelley was no isolated patriot; he loved Italy more than England; he loved mankind more than Italy. Keats was of no nation whatsoever, but the nation of loveliness. Tennyson reverted to the merely patriotic feeling which contains a contempt of other countries than our own. But Browning maintained, in poetry which is Italian, French, Spanish more than English, the wider and nobler patriotism which loves man as man, independent of all national distinctions. That idea lasts, and its mightiest and noblest development is in the future. When it is fully grasped in action, poetry will receive its highest impulse and accomplish its most splendid and passionate song.

The second corollary from the original idea which took form in literature was a protest for liberty and against oppression. This idea has always been natural to mankind and it has always formed one of the great motives for poetry. Nevertheless it took at this time in English literature a more plain and practical turn than it had taken before. The fall of the old fortress of Bastille was the beginning of the end of the old order based on suppression of

liberty. Shortly before it happened Cowper had addressed Bastille thus—

“Ye horrid towers, the abode of broken hearts,  
Ye dungeons and caverns of despair,  
That monarchs have supplied from age to age,  
With music such as suits their sovereign ear,  
The sighs and groans of miserable men !  
There is not an English heart that would not leap  
To hear that ye are fallen at last !”

Wordsworth heard the crash of its towers ; Coleridge heard it, and both recorded their joy and welcomed it as the new dawn. The right, so long considered divine, of the rich and the powerful to exploit the poor for their own support, came to be realised as the vilest wrong.

The third idea contained in the original conception of Revolution was “The Return to nature”. This idea was not entirely new, but it was Rousseau who gave it a full vague. He held that the true happiness of man consisted in a simple, almost primeval life in accordance with nature. In England this idea helped to destroy the school of Pope which was eminently a school of citied culture. It dawned in the poetry of Thompson ; it even influenced in his scholastic retirement the precise and awful verse of Gray. Poetry left the city and took a country house. The poets played with the new idea, but they were not passionate for it. However, as the French form of the Revolution drew near, the air grew warmer; this idea began to be a new power. Goldsmith, Cowper and Crabbe developed it. It rose into passion in Burns. And when the French Revolution broke out, it became one of the vital spirit of English literature. It was a vast revolution, and its has endured in literature for more than one century. It opened out to literature not only the whole of the country life, but also the emotional life of the largest and the most varied class in humanity, the class of the poor. Henceforth, the range of literature was as wide as human nature itself.

Another idea which was adopted into poetry at his time was also the direct outcome of the revolutionary thought. This was the vision and the prophecy of a universal regeneration of mankind, of a golden age, not mournfully looked back on something that passed away, but joyfully anticipated in the future. We find this idea in the Bible as embodied in its conception of the coming Millennium ;

but this Golden age was reserved for the chosen few of God. Under the influence of the revolutionary philosophy the philosophers proclaimed the right of all mankind to competition and perfection in Golden Age. We find it first in Cowper, but somewhat limited by his theology. He sees the time when love shall be the master of all men, evil annihilated, and God be wholly at home with men. Coleridge and Wordsworth took up the same thought and sang of it in connection with the outbreak of the Revolution. This vision of the universal regeneration of mankind reached its culmination in Shelley.

These were the main ideas of the Revolution as incorporated in English literature. The English poets had felt the revolutionary ideas long before 1789. Goldsmith, Gray, Cowper, Thompson, Crabbe, Blake and Burns showed in their works the spirit of the revolution before the Revolution. They expressed revolutionary ideas with growing passion, but these ideas did not take a clear form in their poetry. They rose into clear life and form after 1789. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey embodied them. Then they decayed after Walter Scott had represented the reaction against them; and they decayed in the hands of very men who had expressed their youth. Out of their decay they sprang up again in Byron and Shelly; and they died altogether for a time in Keats.

French Revolution affected the Romantics each in a different way. Wordsworth was but nineteen when it occurred. In the morning of life in the first flush of youth when the splendour of the Revolution first appeared, he believed it to be the great morning of the world. He experienced the freshness of the dawn, the invigorating air of the atmosphere and the hopefulness of it all:—

“Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive  
But to be young was very heaven.”

He was very much influenced by Rousseau's doctrine of ‘Return to Nature’. He fled from cities, worked for his own living, and no one has ever clung closer to the heart of the common earth. Wordsworth's new theory of poetry and poetic diction was based on the belief that in the natural phraseology of man educated by nature and living a natural life, was to be found the true language of poetry. And the heroes of this new poetry were not warriors, princes, philosophers but the shepherds of the hill and the ploughmen at work.

Wordsworth's attachment to the Revolution was both ideological and emotional. He approved of the revolutionary creed and he was in love with a French girl. National feeling were supplanted by love of France. But his faith could not withstand the shock and stress of the subsequent course of Revolution. "His hopes and faith had been a part of the dawn but as the sun darkened before noon Wordsworth's exercise of hope became desperate hoping against hope." As he saw the ideas of Revolution being corrupted by its votaries in France and as he saw Napoleon strangling the infant democracy, his sensitive nature suffered a shock. The result was a moral crisis from which Wordsworth could not emerge with his poetic personality intact. He became a worshipper of Duty—"Stern daughter of the voice of God." And for the rest of his life he was considered a "renegade" and a lost leader by the young Romantics. His best poetry was produced in the first flush of Revolutionary hope. The decline of his poetic inspiration has been attributed by some critics to the loss of political faith in Revolution.

Coleridge, too, gave his passionate sympathy to France and her revolutionary ideals. Like Wordsworth he, too, was smitten with grief and shame when England took up arms against France. He, too, dreamed of Pantisocracy. And he recanted earlier than Wordsworth. But he took his recantation with a philosophical calm and did not experience the pang of any moral crisis.

Born a year before the first meeting of Estate-Generals, Byron was too young to grasp the full significance of the event when Napoleon stifled the last struggles of Revolution. Hence he shows an awareness of a great void in the world surrounding him, of faith that has fallen, of hopes that have been belied.

"In several respects", says S. A. Brooke, "Byron was more completely a child of the Revolution than either Wordsworth or Coleridge." In his hands English poetry became, for the first time European, as much interested in Weimar Florence, Venice, Rome and Paris, as in London. In him we find the complete fulfilment of the cosmopolitanism of the Revolutionary philosophy. He was a supreme Romantic. He constantly expresses his disdain of all checks.

Shelley represents the influence of the idealistic aspect of the Revolutionary philosophy. Like Byron, he came at a time of reaction. His imagination was inspired more by abstract ideas than by facts or events. Unlike Byron he remained in his inner spirit wholly unaffected by the reaction. He felt an enormous antagonism



between good and evil, but the white flame of his devotion to what seemed to him a sacred cause was thereby only intensified. The preaching and propaganda aspect of the Revolution also finds its counterpart in Shelley. "All the illusions of the Revolution, many of them generous illusions, perfectibility, disregard of tradition and inheritance, the contrast between a benevolent Nature and a selfish Society—are to be found in full vigour in Shelley. Together with them is also to be found everything that was noble and admirable, everything that was of a constructive character in the Revolution, its faith in humanity, its longing for justice, and its passion for brotherhood of man." Shelley's imagination caught the revolutionary idea of the universal regeneration of mankind. In his famous 'Ode to the West Wind' he becomes a prophet prophesying for the dawn of the Golden age. "If winter comes can spring be far behind?" With true revolutionary zeal and fiery wrath he flung aside all the social and political limitations and lost himself in songs of welcome. The fourth act of 'Prometheus Unbound' is the choral song of the regeneration of all mankind in love and peace and joy.

The French Revolution influenced Wordsworth, Coleridge and Blake on the sentimental side, Shelley on the intellectual side, Byron on the political side. It had no perceptible influence on Keats. He shows not the least trace of its ever having occurred. Though attempts have been made to read revolutionary implications into 'Hyperion' it will be more proper to say that Keats was wholly unaffected by the great upheaval in France and Europe.

## **French Revolution and Its Impact on English Literature**

### **A Synopsis :**

1. French Revolution proved a landmark in the literary history of the continent. The background to English Romantic Movement was furnished by the French Revolution as a historical event and by a revolutionary philosophy as an ideology.

2. The main idea of the Revolution was equality. This idea was already present in English literature. But it was French Revolution that gave it a clear and definite shape—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Browning.

3. The second corollary from the original idea was a protest for liberty and against oppression. This idea has always been natural to mankind. Nevertheless, it took at this time in English literature a more plain and practical turn.



4. The third idea of Revolution was 'The Return to Nature'. This idea was not new, but it was Rousseau who gave it full vogue.

5. Another idea which was also the direct outcome of the Revolutionary thought was the vision and the prophecy of a universal regeneration of mankind. —Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley.

6. Wordsworth was very much influenced by Rousseau's doctrine of 'Return to Nature'. Wordsworth's new theory of poetry and poetic diction was based on this belief. His attachment with the Revolution was both ideological and emotional. But as he saw the ideas of the Revolution being corrupted by its votaries in France, his nature suffered a shock. The result was a moral crisis from which he could not emerge with his poetic personality in tact.

7. Coleridge, too, gave his passionate sympathy to France and her revolutionary ideals. But he took his recantation with a philosophical calm and did not experience the pang of any moral crisis.

8. In several respects Byron was more completely a child of the Revolution than either Wordsworth or Coleridge. In him we find the complete fulfilment of the cosmopolitanism of the Revolutionary philosophy. He expresses his disdain of all checks.

9. Shelley represents the influence of the idealistic aspect of the Revolutionary philosophy—its faith in humanity, its longing justice, its passion for the brotherhood of man. His imagination caught the revolutionary ideal of the universal regeneration of mankind.

10. The French Revolution effected the Romantics each in a different way. It had no perceptible influence on Keats.

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### 3. Romanticism

*Or*

#### “The Renaissance of Wonder”

The close of the eighteenth century is marked by a dramatic and epoch-making change in the history of the Continent of Europe. The old landmarks were to be thrown clattering to the ground. In a few years the appearance, thought, sentiment and literature of the world were to be transformed beyond recognition. In one aspect, this change manifests itself in the speed and fury of the French Revolution, in another, in the industrial scientific revolution, in yet another, in the literary and artistic revolution known as the Romantic movement.

The style, mental attitude and achievements of Jean Jacques Rousseau entitle him to be described as the first striking literary phenomenon in what is called the Romantic movement. Yet it is not literature which Rousseau challenges, but society. His life and writings are a protest, not against the stereotyped literary standards, but against the stifling conventions of the world. He demands not the freedom of the artist, but the freedom of man : “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.” His style of writing, it is true, is a new thing in French literature. It is free, impassioned, of the heart ; it is romantic. His doctrines swept France and paved the way for the Revolution. The French Revolution and the literary Romantic movement were the products of the same intellectual ferment.

But what appears a sudden eruption of volcano in the eighteenth century was only a culminating incident of a vaster European movement which began atleast as early as the fifteenth century. In the medieval period we have Europe dominated by Roman Catholic Church and the feudal system—a society which looked askance at change, discouraged science, suppressed free thought and imposed severe limits on artistic invention. The earlier break away from old order—that of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries—was marked by religious changes, enterprise in geographical discovery, slow but steady progress in science, and outburst of romantic activity in literature. But each movement towards what may be called the

Left was checked by reaction towards the Right. In England, when the Roman church went under, the monarchy held up its head proudly ; when the monarchy went under, the aristocracy prospered abundantly. In France, a despotic monarchy regained the hold which in the sixteenth century it had nearly lost. At last too long bottled up forces of modern spirit burst forth in the explosion of the Revolution ; the smouldering fire of new ideas took the form of conflagration which set ablaze every country of Western Europe.

But let us concentrate our attention on the literary aspect of this backward and forward swing of the pendulum in the social life of the world. The Elizabethans under the influence of the Renaissance revolted against the medieval suppressions. They flagrantly cast off the shackles and asserted their freedom with an exuberance which wearied the fastidious, and made their vogue a short one. Ben Jonson sounded the note of warning. Rapine and Boileau in literary criticism, led the final counter attack, and swept all before them. Sheltered under the revered name of the classics, the critics of the age of Prose and Reason steadily advanced. It was as if by some ironic cunning of the Time Spirit that the classics, first summoned to the aid of those who rebelled against medieval repression, were afterwards successfully used to crush the rebels themselves. The first terrific outburst of the Renaissance was followed by a pause, a retreat, a consolidation of positions. a prolonged rest. Thus in the see-saw of the world movement the contending forces of classicism and romanticism rose and fell.

Romanticism can better be understood in terms of human psychology. It is, as Cazamian says, "The affirmation of an innovatory aesthetic creed as opposed to an orthodox art." There is an alternation or action and reaction between acceptance of, or challenge to, prevailing literary values and standards. Classicism results when the instinct of acceptance ripens. The romantic element develops when the instinct of wonder predominates. Romanticism, which has been called 'Renaissance of Wonder' by Theodore Watts Dunton, "merely indicates that there are two great impulses governing man—the impulse of acceptance—the impulse to take unchallenged and for granted all the phenomena of the outer world as they are—and the impulse to confront these with the eyes of inquiry and wonder."

There may be different kinds of wonder : the native and eager childlike wonder of primitive poetry or the Hamlet-like wonder at

the mystery of human life. This is the poetical attitude which the human mind assumes when confronting the unseen powers of the universe. This is the romantic attitude. It is the kind of wonder which filled the soul of Spenser, and of Marlowe when he exclaimed :

“Had I a thousand souls...”

Or when he wrote :

“If all the pens that poets ever held...”

It filled the soul of Shakespeare when he wrote .

“Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow...”

It was the attitude of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Virgil, of Webster, Ford, Tourneur.

We should not confuse the ancient classics with the so-called classicism. Homer and Virgil do not lose their fascination for those steeped in romanticism. The fire of Aeschylus did not burn for Pope or Addison, and the humanism of Euripides could have roused few responsive echoes in the heart of Boileau. Yet the neo-classical writers summoned the ancients to help them in their task of restoring literary law and order, and of stabilizing the forms and standards of poetic art. They paid little attention to the gradual, organic growth of drama on Attic soil, and to the fact that the distinctive form it achieved there in the fifth century belonged to just that society, at that period, and could never be reproduced again, in just that way, at any other time or place. They studied its methods, its rules, its technique ; but because they too often studied these without attempting to penetrate into its spirit, they arrived at the rules only, and forgot the drama and poetry. Thus classicism fell into the hands of those whom Walter Pater describes as “praisers of what is old and accustomed, at the expense of what is new.....Critics who would have never discovered for themselves the charm of any work, whether old or new...who would never really have been made glad by any Venus fresh—risen from the sea, and who praise the Venus of old Greece and Rome, only because they fancy her grown into something staid and tame.”

It was a travesty of classicism which passed itself off for the real thing, and brought discredit on it. Pater contrasts this misleading idea of the classical with its authentic charm. “The charm of what is classical, in art or literature, is that of the well known tale, to which we can, nevertheless, listen over and over again, because it is told so well.” The work of the classical artist is to give expression and beauty of form to a body of common sentiments and thoughts

which he shares with his audience, thoughts and views which have for his generation the validity of universal truths. Classical art has more of traditional, communal and national elements already recognized by the mass of men. Any tendency to eccentricity is checked by social conscience. On the other hand romanticism is an overwhelming preoccupation with and an accent on individuality of the writer himself or herself and an unrestrained projection of it in literature. A romantic is essentially and emphatically an egotist and even his so-called objective observations must be deeply suffused with his own subjective emotions. Hence, the difference between the classic and the romantic is one of impress on art, of society on the one hand and of personality on the other.

The classic spirit, then, has its true character and there are also perversions of it. Its qualities when aimed at by meaner minds become defects. And this is true also of the romantic; its brilliant qualities pass into the fault of the exaggerated, the grotesque, the sloppy. But these perversions of type, all the more because they are exaggerations, help us to see the deep lying distinction between the classic and the romantic. It is not simply a distinction between ancient and modern. There was romanticism, mysticism and grotesque fantasy in ancient literature also. It is a distinction between tendencies, between forms of objective expression which were especially admired by cultivated Athenians and forms of self expression more congenial to the individualists of the north. "Perhaps", observes Prof. R. A. Scott James. "We may compare it with the difference between the Mediterranean sea, round whose shores classicism has prospected and the moody northern oceans familiar to Teutons and Scandinavians."

The Greeks saw all their deities in human form. They loved to personify them alike in worship and in artistic representation. Form, outward form, is the first distinctive element in classicism, and on this beauty of outward form, with its attributes of symmetry, balance, order, proportion, reserve, it takes its stand. And, as contrasted with this, the romantic tends to emphasize the spirit which lies behind form—not the formless, but the freedom which is not content with any one form, but experiments, and expresses itself now in this, now in that way, as the spirit dictates. The first tends always to emphasize the "this worldliness" of beauty that we know; the second its "other worldliness". For the first, then, "the proper



study of mankind is man", whilst the second, in its pursuit of the soul, looks for it in strange and unknown places, and in the wilder scenes of nature :

"Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance."

The one always seeks a mean ; the other an extremity. Repose satisfies the classic ; adventure attracts the romantic. The one appeals to tradition ; the other demands the novel. On the one side we may range the virtues and defects which go with the notions of fitness, propriety, measure, restraint, conservatism, authority, calm, experience, comeliness ; on the other, those which are suggested by excitement, restlessness, spirituality, curiosity, progress, liberty, experiment, provocativeness.

Sidney Colvin has remarkably brought out the difference between the romantic and classic art. "In classical writing every idea is called up to the mind as nakedly as possible, and at the same time as distinctly ; it is exhibited in white light and left to produce its effect by its own unaided power. In romantic writing, on the other hand, all objects are exhibited as it were through a coloured and iridescent atmosphere. Round about every idea the romantic writer summons up a cloud of accessory and subordinate ideas for the sake of enchanting its effect, if at the risk of confusing its outlines. The temper, again, of the romantic, is one of excitement, while the temper of the classical writer is one of self-possession. No matter what the power of his subject, the classical writer does not fail to assert his mastery over it and over himself, while the romantic writer seems as though his subject were ever on the point of dazzling and carrying him away. On the one hand there is calm, on the other enthusiasm ; the virtues of one style (classic) are strength of grasp, with clearness and justness of presentment ; the virtues of the other style are glow of spirit, with magic and richness of suggestion."

Romanticism—which Victor Hugo calls "liberalism in literature"—is the expression of life as seen through imagination. C. M. Bowra also confirms the same when he holds, "Imagination is supreme in the romantic poetry." The origin of romantic feeling, however, lies in curiosity and the sense of mystery. "It is the addition of strangeness to beauty." Pater suggests, "that constitutes the romantic temper...it is the addition of curiosity to the desire of beauty." And it is as the illustration of these qualities that it

seeks the ancient world of Greece and the Middle Ages. In the overcharged atmosphere of the Middle Ages there are unworked sources of romantic effect, of strange beauty to be won by strong imagination out of things unlikely or remote. The romantic approach is do not go too close to things : distance lends enchantment to the view. Vagueness of feeling, a tendency away from actuality, are the signs of romantic element. The romantic poet eschews singing of "familiar matter of to-day" and sings of.

"...old unhappy, far-off things,

And battles long ago : "

Or of,

"Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

Or of,

"A savage place ! as holy and enchanted  
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
By woman wailing for her demon-lover !"

Dr. F. H. Hedge, in common with other critics, mentions the indefiniteness or incompleteness of its creations and aspirations besides wonder and the sense of mystery as characteristic of Romantic art. He says : "Romantic relates to classic somewhat as music relates to plastic art... It (music) presents no finished ideal, but suggests ideals beyond the capacity of canvass or stone. Plastic art acts on the intellect, music on the feelings ; the one affects us by what it presents, the other by what it suggests." H. A. Beers explains and illustrates the meaning of indefiniteness and emotional suggestiveness. "A Greek temple, statue, or poem has no imperfection, and offers no further promise, indicates nothing beyond what it expresses. It fills the sense, it leaves nothing to the imagination. It stands correct, symmetric, sharp in outline, in the clear light of day. There is nothing more to be done to it ; there is no concealment about it. But in romantic art there is seldom this completeness. The workman lingers, he would fain add another touch, his ideal eludes him. Is a Gothic cathedral ever really finished ? Is 'Faust' finished ? Is 'Hamlet' explained ? The modern spirit is mystical ; its architecture, painting, poetry employ shadow to produce their highest effects : shadow and colour rather than contour."

Walter Pater in his essay on Romanticism reminds us that the terms Romanticism and Classicism do not describe particular

literatures, or particular periods in literary history so much as certain counterbalancing qualities and tendencies which run through the literatures of all countries. H. A. Beers thus summarizes Pater : "There were romantic writings among the Greeks and Romans ; there were classical writings in the Middle Ages ; nay, there are classical and romantic traits in the same author. If there is any poet who may safely be described as a classic, it is Sophocles ; and yet Pater declares that the 'Philoctetes' of Sophocles, if issued today, would be called romantic. And he points out—what indeed had been pointed out—that 'Odyssey' is more romantic than the 'Iliad' : is, in fact, rather a romance than a hero-epic. The adventures of the wandering Ulysses, the visit to the land of the lotus-eaters, the encounter with the Laestrygonians, the experiences in the cave of Polyphemus, if allowance be made for the difference in sentiments and manners, remind the reader constantly of the medieval romans adventure."

Romantic is sometimes opposed to classic, sometimes to realistic. This would result somewhat in a confusion of critical terminology. When the writer attempts a conscientious picture of common facts of human life he is realistic. When he depicts life as it may be, or ought to be, he is idealistic. If he presents mystical or supernatural experiences or introduces such elements he is both romantic and idealistic. The realistic writer is generally calm and restrained, and his expression is devoid of that emotional suggestiveness that is the essence of romantic art. He does not beckon us to the beyond. So realistic literature often tends to be classic also. But we have sometimes romantic realism when the remote in time and place and the imaginative reconstruction of the distant ages are visualized to us by realistic details. Several of Browning's poems—like the 'Epistle of Kharshish'—and Conrad's novels are illustrations of romantic realism in literature.

Whatever our efforts to define romanticism, there will always remain some indefiniteness and vagueness about it. The difficulty, almost the impossibility, of defining romanticism indicates the elusive quality of the romantic element in literature. Like the sea-god Poseidon, as soon as we think we have grasped what is romanticism, it presents another aspect before us.

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## Romanticism or Renaissance of Wonder

### A Synopsis :

1. The close of the eighteenth century is marked by epoch-making changes in the history of Continent.

2. The French Revolution and the literary Romantic movement were the products of the same intellectual ferment.

3. There is the backward and forward swing of the pendulum in the social life of the world.

4. Romanticism is an affirmation of an innovatory aesthetic creed as opposed to an orthodox art. There is an alternation or action and reaction between acceptance of, or challenge to, prevailing literary standards. Classicism results when the spirit of acceptance ripens. The romantic element develops when the instinct of wonder predominates.

5. We should not confuse the ancient classics with the so-called classicism. It was a travesty of classicism which passed itself off for the real thing, and brought discredit on it. The difference between the classic and the romantic is one of impress on art, of society on the one hand and personality on the other.

6. The distinction between the classic and the romantic is not simply a distinction between ancient and modern. It is a distinction between tendencies, between forms of objective expression which were especially admired by cultivated Athenians, and forms of self expression more congenial to the individualists of the north.

7. On the side of classicism we may range the virtues and defects which go with the notions of fitness, propriety measure, restraint, authority, comeliness ; on the side of romanticism, those which are suggested by excitement, spirituality, curiosity, progress, liberty, provocation.

8. The virtue of one style (classic) are strength of grasp, with clearness and justness of presentment ; the virtues of other style are glow of spirit, with magic and richness of suggestion.

9. Romanticism is addition of strangeness to beauty. And it is as the illustration of these qualities that it seeks the ancient world of Greece and the Middle Ages. The romantic approach is 'do not go too close to things ; distance lends enchantment to view.'

10. Romantic relates to classic somewhat as music relates to plastic art.

11. Romanticism and classicism do not describe particular periods in literary history so much as certain counterbalancing tendencies which run through the literatures of all centuries.

12. Romantic is sometimes opposed to classic, sometimes to realistic.

13. The difficulty, almost the impossibility, of defining romanticism indicates the elusive quality of the Romantic element in literature.



## The Age of Interrogation

The modern age begins as a marked reaction against the age of Queen Victoria. The Victorian age stood for self-complacency and dogmatic certainty—a natural outcome of unprecedented progress in every sphere. England with her ever expanding colonial empire, internal peace and prosperity, industrial advance, extension of franchise, spread of education, scientific progress regarded herself as having reached the very climax of glory and perfection. All the institutions, both temporal and spiritual—the Home, the Constitution, the Christian religion, the Empire—were deemed unshakable. The Victorian era was a time of high aspiration when “hope had a flattering tale and optimism became a sort of religion.” Therefore, we observe in many of the Victorian authors a dogmatic certainty with an emotional bias that was peculiar to the age and may therefore be said to constitute Victorianism.

As the 19th century began to draw to a close, discordant notes came to be heard and the so-called solid and perfect Victorian edifice showed not a few chinks. The reverses sustained in the Boer War exploded the myth of the invincibility of English arm; the entry of other European nations into the world markets challenged English



industrial supremacy. Several voices in politics, religion and literature struck a definitely anti-victorian note.

In the study of literature few things are more interesting than to consider the periodic changes of outlook which sway the human mind and spirit, to observe those recurrent fluctuations of values which cause the truth and certainties of one generation to appear as superstitious and baseless conventions in the eyes of the following generations. Young men and young women during the early decades of the twentieth century looked back upon the Victorian age with a sceptical lifting of the eyebrows and an ironical grin. This attitude was due to the changes in the mood and temperament of the people of the first quarter of the twentieth century. "From 1901 to 1925", observes A. C. Ward, "English literature was directed by mental attitudes, moral ideals and spiritual values at almost the opposite extremes from the attitudes, ideals and values governing Victorian literature." The attitude of docile acceptance and reverence was replaced by an angry and insurgent mood. The spirit of inquiry and interrogation exposed the facile optimism of the age, which consequently came to be looked upon as hypocritical and stuffy. The old certainties were certainties no longer. Everything was held to be open to question from the nature of Deity to the construction of verse form.

Victorianism was bound to die of its own excess: and it had long been dying. As early as 1869, George Meredith had questioned the sincerity of Tennyson's poetry, and referring to the 'Idylls' he asked, "Is not there a scent of damned hypocrisy in all his lisping and vowelled purity of the Idylls." Samuel Butler fired his broadsides against Victorianism in his epoch-making satirical utopia 'Erewhon' and 'Erewhon Revisited', while in 'The Way of All Flesh' he demolished parental authority, sentimentalism and religious self-complacency in particular. Hardy in his Wessex novels gave a new interpretation of sexual morality and shook orthodox belief. In the eighteen-nineties the gravity of the Victorians was further shaken by the Decadents, impatient to eat the fruit of all the trees in the garden of the world. Victorianism outlived the Decadents, but at the turn of the new century came a succession of writers with powerfully sceptical minds untouched by reverence for custom and the established order. They questioned Decadence as thoroughly as they questioned Victorianism and the Age of Interrogation had begun.

The spirit of iconoclasm involved every sphere of life. The Victorian belief of the permanence of institutions yielded place to a consciousness of uncertainty and lack of fixity. Wells speaks of the continuous flow of things in 'The World of William Clissold' and in 'Meanwhile' he suggests that the present world is only a prelude to a future real civilization. In 'The Invisible God' he endeavours to revise the old conception of God. George Bernard Shaw launched a crusade against roseate conceptions of love, marriage, war and economic relations. D. H. Lawrence's dictum that 'man is a thought adventurer' was followed with such frenzy that the modern man found himself standing in the midst of the ruins of Victorian beliefs and ideals. Thus the zeal of inquiry and criticism, which did healthy work in the early years of the twentieth century began to assume a destructive role. Certainty gave place to doubt which in its turn bred pessimism and disillusion. The over enthusiastic iconoclasm of the age is well expressed by Richard Aldington in 'The Eaten Heart' :—

"I like the men and women of my age,  
I like their hardness,  
For though we are a battered and rather bitter set.  
Still we have faced the facts, we have been pretty honest,  
But sitting here brooding over the hard faces,  
I wonder if we have not rejected too much,  
Making it impossible to break out of our self-prisons"

The modern atmosphere of disillusion and futility is not entirely a product of the resurgence of analytical curiosity and rationalistic tendencies. Rationalism has now come to be synonymous with scepticism and agnosticism. This development is largely the outcome of the new findings of science, particularly physics, biology and psychology. In the 19th. century, science marched from triumph to triumph, and the scientific vista was hopeful. But now science is no longer sure of itself. It has come to be described as "the continuous discovery of its own mistakes." The atom, the ether, light and matter are altogether different from what they used to be. Parallel lines, it is said, in some circumstances may meet, and two and two do not necessarily make four. Where nothing is positive and man a mere mechanism operating at the mercy of chemico-physical forces over which he has little or no control, conformity to any religious, moral or social standard is irrelevant, for those standards too are unstable and hollow. Thus scepticism

runs riot and the modern man takes refuge in unlicensed individualism.

The role of psychology in fostering scepticism has been even more remarkable than physics and biology. The new psychology has bred irrationalism and determinism. Irrationalism means want of faith in reason itself, which in the 19th. century was regarded as infallible. The Behaviourish school of psychology doubts the efficacy, if not the very existence of mind, and describes all behaviour in terms of responses to stimuli other psychologists also, like McDougall, emphasize that reason is a product of impulses, instincts and prejudices. The Psycho-analysts like Freud, Adler and Jung, it is true, do not doubt the existence of mind, but they "clearly demonstrate the dependence of its rational upon its non-rational elements."

The Freudian psychology knocked the bottom out of all accepted notions of morality. Freud's stress on the unconscious as a store house of repressed desires, mostly sexual, his analysis of hysteria and neurosis as the outward manifestations of sex inhibition argued an unlimited measure of licence in the realm of sex and morals.

The tendency towards sex-promiscuity was further intensified by the tragedy of the world wars which virtually swept off all known standards of conduct. The post-war reaction to morals degenerated into Bohemianism or Epicureanism. The invention of contraceptives encouraged extra-marital contacts among the young. Economic collapse in the post-war world put family life out of the reach of many thousands ; numerous others determined not to embark upon parenthood in a world in which war was always imminent. Since the desire for children is one main incentive for marriage, the enforced or voluntary renunciation of offspring led to an increase of sexual contacts outside the pale of marriage. Moreover, popularisation of motor cars and cycles provided the opportunity of free movement necessary for unsanctified relations. The war had persuaded many of those for whom death was in constant wait to snatch at the excitements and hoped for comforts and satisfaction of physical intercourse, while the increasing employment of the women made them much less dependent upon the system in which marriage had been the orthodox reward of female virtue. Thus the catastrophe of the World War opened the sluice gates of unlicensed free love.

As a result of all these influences the orthodox notion of sexual morality is bitterly criticized and the question of sex is treated with unprecedented candour in its discussion. The Victorian prudery and conception of holy wedlock have been unceremoniously brushed aside. Love has become more a matter of personal hygiene than of the inexorable laws of the Deity, Mrs. Grundy reigned supreme in the Victorian era, but now the veil was ripped off the physical relations of man and woman. The tendency is found reflected in the writing of Zola and Ibsen who fanned the flame of an irreverent and candid study of the hitherto tabooed province of fleshy desires, Grant Allen glorified sexual lapses in his sensational novel, 'The Woman Who Did'. The heroines of H. G. Wells lose their virtue as Victorian heroines kept theirs. Galsworthy bestows sympathy on faithless wives. Arnold Bennett's heroines, for instance Sophia Baines in 'The Old Wives' Tale', are sympathetically drawn, although they are carried away by their passions. Instances of promiscuous and adulterous sex relationships are found in Somerset Mougham's 'Cakes and Ale', 'The Moon and Six Pence' and other books. Aldous Huxley, it has been utility observe ! turns the fair sex into unfair sex through his pictures of sex promiscuity. The greatest advocate of free love and a perfect reorientation towards sex is D. H. Lawrence. In his 'Lady Chatterley's Lovers' he carries this feature to an extreme limit and incurs the charge of obscenity. James Joyce's 'Ulysses' is so much steeped in sex element that it has sometimes been mistaken for pornographic literature.

The spirit of questioning further deepened with the disillusionment and despair brought by the First World War. Victory of the Allies was a flawed success, which did not bring with it the fulfilment of any of the cherished ideals for which the war had been fought. The plight of the ex-soldier was only one of the many evils that followed in the wake of War. General economic bankruptcy, widespread unemployment, dispersal of art and culture centres, class war, wranglings at the treaty of Versailles, and above all, the failure of the League of Nations endangered sense a of defeat in the nation and let loose the forces of discontent and bitter criticism.

It will thus be seen that owing to the frustrations of the war, the age felt itself permeated with a sense of futility, which found expression both in prose and verse. D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley come foremost as scourgers and scavengers of society. Among other satirists mention may be made of Rose Macaulay who ridicules commercial success, modern philistinism in 'Potterism',



while her 'Crew Train' is the story of Denhom Dobie who finds life largely one boring occupation after another Elizabeth Bowen also indulges in cat-like satire and ridicule in her works. However, the best echo of the post-war age of disillusion and bitterness is heard in T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land.' It is an epitome of the stagmant and timid temper of the period which followed the world catastrophe.

To sum up, the various rebellious and corroding tendencies, "the aids of modernity", in Walter Lippmann's phrase, of the post-war period landed the people of that generation into a spiritual and moral vacuum, and taught them the creed of the 'nothingarian'. They lived in a harassed, perplexed, restless and queasy age. Without the old sign-posts they moved in a trackless waste. They were rudderless boats in the ocean and stood in the need of anchorage, but none was forthcoming. The old landmarks were torn up without new ones replacing them. Thus the zeal of inquiry and criticism which did healthy work in the early years of the twentieth century began to assume a destructive role. The modern age speedily became a rootless generation, a vacuum with no traditions or guidance.

It is against these manifold currents and cross-currents of science, scepticism, sex obsession, intellectual curiosity, love of revolt and innovation that the literature of the Age of Interrogation is to be studied. The label 'The Age of Interrogation' does not pretend that this phrase fits all the writers or all the works of any of the writers of the first four decades of the 20th century. But it does at least suggest the direction in which the current is flowing during a period marked by a bewildering flux of ideas and of tentative experimentation.

## **The Age of Interrogation**

### **A Synopsis :—**

1. The modern age beings as a marked reaction against the age of Queen Victoria. The Victorian age stood for self-complacency and dogmatic certainty.

2. In the first quarter of the twentieth century English literature was governed by mental attitudes, moral ideals and spiritual values at almost the opposite extremes from those governing Victorian literature. The attitude of docile acceptance and reverence was replaced by an angry and insurgent mood.

3. Victorianism was bound to die of its own excess; and it



had long been dying—George Meredith, Samuel Butler, Hardy and the Decadents.

4. The spirit of iconoclasm involved every sphere of life. The zeal of inquiry and criticism which did healthy work in the early years of the twentieth century began to assume a destructive role.

5. The modern atmosphere of disillusion and futility is also the outcome of the new findings of science, particularly physics, biology and psychology.

6. The new psychology has bred irrationalism and determinism.

7. The Freudian psychology knocked the bottom out of all accepted notions of morality. The tendency towards sex promiscuity was further intensified by the tragedy of the world wars. The tendency is reflected in the works of Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett, Grant Allen, H. G. Wells, Maugham, D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce.

3. The spirit of questioning further deepened with the disillusionment and despair brought by the First World War. The sense of futility found expression both in prose and verse—D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, Rose Macaulay, Elizabeth Bowen, and T. S. Eliot.

9. The various rebellious and corroding tendencies of the post war period landed the people of that generation into a spiritual and moral vacuum. The old landmarks were torn up without the new ones replacing them.

10. The Age of Interrogation does not pretend that this phrase fits all the writers or all the works of any of the writers of the first four decades of the twentieth century. It only suggests the direction in which the current is following during a period of bewildering flux of ideas and of tentative experimentation,

## 5. Evolution Of The Essay

**Essay defined** — To-day the essay is a recognized and highly developed literary genre, but it took a long time to attain its present perfection. The term essay means an attempt or endeavour. Thus a composition bearing this name was originally a fragmentary tentative expression of one's ideas on a subject. Bacon called his essays "dispersed meditation" and as late as the eighteenth century, Dr. Johnson defined the essay as a "loose sally of the mind an irregular, undigested piece, not an orderly performance". Though an essay as it is now understood, is not a complete and exhaustive survey of a subject, it is certainly much more than an inconclusive, irregular or indifferent piece of writing.

The true essay is essentially personal. It belongs to the literature of self-expression. Treatise and dissertation may be objective; the essay is subjective. 'A good Essay', says E. V. Lucas, "more than a novel, a poem, a play or a treatise, is personality translated into print: between the lines must gleam attractive features or we remain cold." The essay proper is, therefore, not merely a short analysis of a subject, not a mere epitome, but rather a picture of the writer's mind as affected for the moment by the subject with which he is dealing. The essay as a literary form, resembles the lyric, is so far as it is a short, personal composition moulded by some central mood, whimsical, serious or satirical. According to A. C. Benson, "the essence of the essay is soliloquy. It is "the reverie, the frame of mind in which a man says, in the words of old song, 'says I to myself, says I.'" The point of the essay is not the subject, for any subject will suffice, but the rainbow colours of authors personality. Hence it is said that the greatest egotist is the greatest essayist.

**The Father of English Essay: Bacon** — The origin of the essay is traced to Montaigne, the sixteenth century French writer, while Bacon has the credit of transplanting the essay into England. Bacon published three collection of essay between 1597 and 1625. and they show a marked development and expansion of his conception of the essay. The essays of 1597 may justly be called "dispersed meditation". But the essays appearing in 1615 and 1625 are fuller and mellowed Bacon's method as an essayist is

quite different from that of Montaigne. "I am myself the subject of my book", says Montaigne whose aim was self-revelation and who was the father of the personal essay. Bacon's writings do not portray the man himself, though they something declare his own preferences as in "Of Garden"; Bacon gave the essay an objective turn and made his essay the detached musings of a philosopher. The real pre-occupation of his essays was not sensuous or aesthetic but rational and moral. His essay are really a compendium of wordly wisdom. Bacon is too stately and too majestic to have any confidential intercourse with his eaders. He is a wordliwise scholar who talks from a height giving connels to those below. He was thrifty of time, and hence in his hands the essay instead of being an informal chat becomes a string of aphorism. His sentences in the first venture are short, crisp, sententious and almost disjointed; but in the later essays there are connective clauses and conjunctions, there are metaphors and similes, and hence there is warmth and colour. Bacon's essays inspite of their defects and their uncertain morality are a landmark in the history of literature and Bacon remains in the words of Hugh Walker, "the first of English essayists, and for sheer mass and weight of genius, the first of greatest.

**17th Century**—Bacon was the creator of the essay form, but the essay, as we know it to-day, owes little to him. His prose style had great influence but his essays did not win any disciples or imitators. In the seventeenth century the essay developed in the hands of Sir William Temple, Cowley and Dryden, who made it more flexible, companionable and pleasant. The authoritative tone of Bacon's heavy, moralising is replaced by an essay of intimate contact with the reader and it is on this line that the essay was to develop in future. The writing of 'Character Sketches' by Hall, Overbury and Earle during this century also promoted the growth of the essay.

**Essay and Journalism**—The next milestone in the development of the essay is associated with the rise of the periodical literature at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Addison and Steele in 'The Tatler' and the 'Spectator' followed the best Dryden tradition and their essays reveal an interesting note of ease, lightness of touch and a free and intimate contact with the reader. Steele and Addison were ideally matched as literary partners; each was the exact complement of the other. Steele was

modest, erratic and original; Addison prudent, reflective and painstaking. Steele was more warm-hearted and inventive than Addison and Addison more effective than Steele.

Addison set out to be a mild censor of the morals of the age, and most of his compositions deal with topical subjects—fashions, head dresses, practical jokes, polite conversation. In the words of Macaulay he was "the great satirist, who alone knew how to use ridicule without abusing it, who without inflicting a wound, effected a great social reform, and who reconciled wit and virtue after a long and disastrous separation, during which wit had been led astray by profligacy, and virtue by fanaticism". He endeavoured "to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality" and claimed to have "brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and coffee-houses". He was eminently successful in his purpose, for he used the instrument of gentle wit and mild irony and avoided satire or sharp ridicule. For the first time the essay was employed to serve a distinctly moral purpose, and Addison thus became what Courthope has called "a powerful architect of public opinion". Nor were its earlier functions quite forgotten, for the periodical essay was equally adapted for literary criticism and the delineation of character attaining a high degree of perfection in the latter. Besides, broadening the scope of the essay, Addison created a new prose style which Dr. Johnson has called "the model of the middle style", "familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentation". His great contribution to the English essay is that he softened and humanised it by his freedom of choice, easy and familiar style as also by his mild, subtle and polished humour.

**Dr. Johnson**—The next stage in the evolution of the essay is associated with Dr. Johnson and Goldsmith, who contributed their essays to 'The Rambler', 'The Idler' and 'The Bee' which were modelled on the 'Spectator'. Johnson deviated from the path carved out by Addison. The note of easy companionship is missing and his essays also lack humour. In fact, Johnson was too weighty a scholar to treat successfully the essay form which requires the light and graceful touch. To quote his own remark on Milton's style, we may say "he was a lion who had no skill in dandling the kid".

**Goldsmith**—Goldsmith, on the contrary, kept treading the path blazed by Addison. Like Addison, he ridiculed the follies



of his age, but he possesses the Aerial touch and has something of Puck too. His prose is simpler than Johnson's and sweeter than Addison's "He is the most amiable of English authors" as Thackeray calls him. Even his irony is tender, and his humour is summer lightning which may charm and surprise but does not harm any living creature. Goldsmith's lovable character and the charm of his personality have sweetened his essays. Unlike Steele and Addison, who are sunken in the crowd for which they speak and who are not the perfect egotists to be identified with the perfect essayists, Goldsmith's essays are a clear mirror in which are reflected the sweetness and magnanimity.

**The early 19th Century**—The nineteenth century witnessed the real flowering of the essay. The century seemed to have opened the flood-gates for the essay as a recognised form of literature. Both the personal and the impersonal kinds of essays began to flourish. It was in this age that a number of literary and critical magazines and reviews came into being and most of the budding writers launched upon their career by contributing articles to them. The 'Edinburgh Review' and the 'Quarterly Review' generally published essays of critical and weighty character. The 'Blackwood Magazine', the 'Fraser's Magazine' and the 'London Magazine' popularised the essay of both critical and personal kind.

**The Prince of Essayists**—Lamb carries on the tradition of Steele and Goldsmith—the tradition of self-portraiture. "The perfect egotist is the perfect essayist" says the proverb and Lamb's essays are the finest illustration of the validity of this dictum. Like Montaigne he himself is the subject of his essays. Lamb is constantly autobiographical; his whole life may be constructed from the 'Essays of Elia.' The 'Essays of Elia' are beautiful pieces revealing all the facets of Lamb's whimsical personality, his sweetness of heart, his tenderness of disposition, his wisdom and sympathy. He takes the reader into his confidence and conceals nothing from him. His essays have the great charm of spontaneity and naturalness. Like Montaigne he could also say, "I speak unto the paper as unto the first man I meet." His essays are really lyrics in prose because every one of them is spontaneous expression of some dominant emotion—whimsical, playful or pathetic.

Lamb's style is neither so clear nor so simple as that of his predecessors; it is conversational, lacks both restraint and formality and is frequently rhetorical. He was very much influenced by



Thomas Browne, Burton, Fullar and other authors of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. His 'whim wham' as he called them, found their best expression in quaint words and antique phrases, far-fetched comparisons and paradoxical remarks. Strip Elia of these and he is nothing. However, the greatest charm of his essays is in his fine blending of humour and pathos. Nobody experienced and understood more fully than Lamb the intertwining of the ludicrous and the pathetic elements in life. Humour in Lamb is never far from tragedy; through his tears one may see the rainbow in the sky. Humour and pathos are the different facets of the same gem; this is so much in evidence in his essays that the reader, without knowing the authorship, at once exclaims, "It is Elia, the Prince charming of English essayists."

**Hazlitt**—Side by side the critical and literary essays was also flourishing in the hands of Lamb, Hazlitt. De Quincey and Leigh Hunt. Hazlitt's best critical works are "The Characters of Shakespeare", 'The English Poets' and 'The Dramatic Literature of the age of Elizabeths'. These critical essays, although sometimes marred by his extra-literary prejudices, entitle him to be placed in the foremost rank of English critics. His miscellaneous essays are autobiographical, and frankly tell about his temperament, his prejudices, his enthusiasms and his limitations. Every essay is a fragment of autobiography, every sentence a confession.

**The Opium-eater**—De Quincey wrought his essays with highly poetic, ornate and musical style which reminds us of Thomas Browne. His 'Confessions of an Opium Eater' has something of the intimacy and confidential touch of Lamb. As a critical essayist his superb article on knocking at the gate in the Porter scene of 'Macbeth', is his masterpiece.

**Victorian Age**—Throughout this century the essay continued to develop in these two directions—the critical and the personal. Among the critical and literary essayists of the middle and later nineteenth century, the most illustrious names are those of Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin, Pater and Mathew Arnold. Macaulay is a brilliant, though an unbalanced critic, with a pictorial, grandiloquent style. He may be looked upon as the founder of the historical essays. What we do not find in Macaulay and the absence of which denies him a place among the essayists properly so-called, is the intimacy of personal confidence. He is merely the essayist, historian. We have the writer but not the man.

**Carlyle**—In marked contrast with Macaulay, is Thomas Carlyle, the prophet and censor of the Victorian era. His views find expression in 'Hero and Hero-Worship', but his individuality lies in his fiery, rugged, inimitable style which makes even his critical essays so very personal in tone.

**Arnold**—The greatest critical essayist of Victorian era is Mathew Arnold. His appreciation of Wordsworth is remarkable and his observation on Shelley, Byron, Goethe and Shakespeare, though not always balanced and impartial, are like Dr. Johnson's utterances, full of common-sense. Arnold exercised a sober, healthful influence on English prose, which, in his hands, attains the clarity, grace and lucidity of the classics.

**Ruskin and Pater**—Among the other essayists of the Victorian Age, mention may be made of Henry Newman, Ruskin and Walter Pater. Newman was the master of supple prose, and at times of a highly wrought style. Ruskin's 'Seven Lamps of Architecture' and 'Stones of Venice' reveal his views on art and morality which, in his opinion, are inter-related. His prose is ornate, gorgeous, laboured and steeped in the Bible. Pater used the essay for the expression of exquisite artistic sensation. He is a hedonist and revels in colour and sensuous language. His 'Appreciations' remains the best work in this direction and is the best exposition of his aesthetic theories.

**Stevenson**—In the last quarter of the nineteenth century R. L. Stevenson recaptured the charm of the personal type of essay. Since Lamb there has been no more accomplished essayist than he. The distant, reserved, professional or didactic tone is replaced by a note of frankness and confidence. With a fine natural gift of an essayist he looked upon everything, even the most trivial scene or even in street or in country, as material of literature. There are two marked tendencies in his essays—the touch of intimacy and moralising tone. He is moralist without being didactic. His ethics is not that of a Puritan. He is original writer whatever may be the topic, he has always something new to say and he has also a new way of saying it. His style is the product of long application and study. He is known to have admitted how he played "the sedulous ape" to old masters of English prose. With Pater, he represents the nineteenth century school of fine writers, who devoted themselves to minuteness of detail in style with great care and unfailing artistic sense. R. L. Stevenson seems to have in his

personality "a deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck, much Antony, of Hamlet most of all, and something of the shorter catechist". These constituents explain the mixture of humour and pathos, interest and instruct in his writings. The best of Stevenson as an essayist is given in his 'Virginibus'.

**20th Century**—The twentieth century proved to be a fertile ground for the development of the essay. It yielded a rich and varied harvest. Now the essay shot out in multifarious directions. Light ordinary subjects of everyday life, history, travels, science, sociology, literature, geography, all became the subject matter of the essay.

**Chesterton and Bellock**—In the beginning of the century the name of G. K. Chesterton stands out prominently among the essayists. His style is remarkable for its ingenuity, a curious sort of humour, and its paradoxes and epigrams. Chesterton's friend Hillaire Bellock was also a born essayist, but rather less personally and idiosyncratically than Chesterton. He occupies a high place among the modern essayists by virtue of the volumes of his essays like 'On Nothing', 'On Something' and 'On Everything'. He has a clear incisive style in which humour, never really removed from satire, plays an important part.

**The Modern Lamb**—Regard for Charles Lamb was never so deep and wide-spread as in the first two decades of the twentieth century; and no other generation was so infected by his spirit. This was to a large extent due to E. V. Lucas's sustained enthusiasm for Lamb. Mr. Lucas is a regular contributor to 'Punch'; his humour is as quiet and graceful as his perfect style. His essays or, "entertainments" as he calls them, are marked by fancy, literary artifice, commonsense and humour. He has an inexhaustible store of new subjects because he has an observant, sympathetic eye that makes all life its peculiar province. A. C. Ward has called him "the modern Lamb" and he really deserves this title because in the modern age his essays are the best examples, in style and outlook, of the 'personal essay'.

**'Alpha of the Plough'**—A. G. Gardiner is perhaps the most delightful of the modern essayists. He wrote under the pen-name of Alpha of the Plough. His important essays are collected in the volumes 'Pebbles on the Shore', 'Leaves in the Wind' and 'Many Furrows'. He has a rare understanding of men and affairs and wields a fluent and persuasive style enlivened by touches of quiet humour. His essays are full of amusing anecdotes and homely

illustrations drawn from everyday experience and they read like short stories. He is a writer who entertains and delights the reader while he raises his moral tone and elevates his soul. With him the subject does not matter much. The essayist can write on any topic he likes ; he should not sermonize. Any peg will do to hang his hat. The hat is the thing. Thus he resembles Stevenson in his attitude to the art of essay-writing, but he is not laboured in his style and impresses us, not as a man at work but as a man at play. He charms the reader with his gentle personal and persuasive manner and in this respect he resembles the author of the 'Essays of Elia'. His essays are sweet morsels of writing. "Alpha has been compared with Elia, more aptly perhaps he might be compared with Stevenson, and yet why make any comparison at all ? It is surely enough to have an essayist so human, so easy, so friendly as Alpha".

Of the later writers of essay J. B. Priestly, A. A. Milne, E. V. Knox, Herbert Read, and Robert Lynd stand out most clearly as real essayists, though there are many others, such as Edmund Blunden and C. E. Montague, who made excellent but less constant use of the form, and others, again who wrote essays which like some of Aldous Huxley's valuable sociological essays, hardly fall within to category of the essay proper.

**Y.Y** :—Among the present essayists Robert Lynd is perhaps the greatest. "He has marched into literature by way of journalism"—that is an estimate of Lynd given by J. B. Priestley and very correctly too. He wrote under the pen name of 'Y. Y'. From his work as a journalist he had learnt the knack of writing on anything and everything and that is what makes his essays so pleasant and so popular a reading. He did not start with the idea that he should be solemn and devout in his literary exercises but any subject for him was suitable to write upon. He wrote upon subjects like 'The Mouse', 'Silence', 'Going For A Walk', 'On Feeling Gay' and always with the same amount of facility and ease. The quality with him was the quality that A. C. Benson finds in Charles Lamb, of treating "romantically the homeliest stuff of life" and showing "how the simplest and commonest experiences were rich with emotion and humour". Lynd was rich in imagination and he knew where and how to utilize it. He considered imagination as a faculty "which enables the eye to see and the ear to hear things that they did not see or hear before." Along with this quality, Lynd has an all-embracing sympathy, keen and very



minute observation, picturesqueness of description, a charm of personality and a touch of humour. His style is simpler and less elaborate, and therefore, devoid of the mannerisms of R. L. Stevenson. He has certainly done at least some work that will survive the present generation. He has qualities that remind one sometimes of Lamb, at another of Stevenson and at still another of Alpha. He combines within him all that is best in these and from their synthesis emerges out Lynd with the mark of his own remarkabilities.

These are the essayists who will blaze the trail for the future and continue to inspire succeeding generations for adventures in the delightful and inexhaustible realm of the essay. The mantle of Lamb has fallen on the moderns. In the words of E. V. Lucas,

"His body lies a-mouldering in the grave

But his soul goes marching on"

And with the continuous march of his soul, will keep place the Essay properly so-called.

#### A SYNOPSIS

1. The term essay means an attempt or endeavour. It belongs to the literature of self-expression. As a literary form it resembles the lyric. The point of the essay is not the subject, for any subject will suffice, but the rainbow colours of the author's personality. Hence it is said that the greatest egotist is the greatest essayist.

2. **Bacon**—He has the credit of transplanting essay into England. He published three collection of essays between 1597 and 1625. The essays of 1597 may justly be called "dispersed meditation". But the essays appearing in 1615 and 1625 are fuller and mellower. He gave the essay an objective turn. His essays are the compendium of worldly wisdom. His style is aphoristic.

3. **17th Century**—Sir William Temple, Cowley and Dryden made essay more flexible and pleasant. The writing of 'Character Sketches' also promoted the growth of the essay.

4. **Essay and Journalism**—Steele and Addison in 'Tatler' and 'Spectator' used the essay for distinctly moral purpose. Addison tried to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality. Addison created a new prose style which Dr. Johnson called "the model of the middle style".

5. **Dr. Johnson**—Johnson was too weighty a scholar to treat successfully the essay form which requires the light and graceful touch.



**6. Goldsmith**—He kept treading the path of personal essays. He possesses the aerial touch and has something of Puck too. His prose is simpler than Johnson's and sweeter than Addison's.

**7. The Prince of Essayists**—Lamb carries on the tradition of self-portraiture. Like Montaigne, he himself is the subject of his essays. His essays have the charm of spontaneity and naturalness. His style is conversational, whimsical, quaint and full of references. However, the greatest charm of his essays is the fine blending of humour and pathos.

**8. Hazlitt and De Quincey**—Hazlitt critical works are of a high quality. His miscellaneous essays are autobiographical. De Quincey wrought his essays with highly poetic, ornate and musical style.

**9. Critical essayists of the Victorian Age**—Macaulay may be looked upon as the founder of the historical essays. Carlyle was the prophet and censor of his age. His individuality lies in his fiery, rugged and inimitable style. Arnold is the greatest critical essayist of the age. His utterances are full of common-sense. His style is characterised by clarity, lucidity and grace. Among other essayists of the age mention may be made of Ruskin, Newman and Pater.

**10. R. L. Stevenson**—He recaptured the charm of the personal type of essays. There are two marked tendencies in his essays—the touch of intimacy and moralising tone which is never oppressive. His style is the product of long application and study.

**11. Chesterton and Bellock**—In the beginning of the twentieth century Chesterton and Bellock stand out prominently.

**12. The Modern Lamb**—In modern age E. V. Lucas is the best example of personal essayist. His essays are marked by fancy, literary artifice, commonsense and humour.

**13. Alpha of the Plough**—A. G. Gardiner is perhaps the most delightful of the modern essayist. He yields a fluent and persuasive style enlivened by touches of quiet humour. His essays are full of amusing anecdotes and homely illustrations.

**14. Robert Lynd**—Among the present essayist he is perhaps the greatest. He has written essays on ordinary subjects and always with the same amount of facility and ease. He was rich in imagination. He has an all-embracing sympathy, keen and minute observation, picturesqueness of description, a charm of personality and a touch of humour.

**15.** These are the essayists who will blaze the trail for the future.

## 6. The Epic—Ancient and Modern

“Now the rich stream of music winds along  
Deep, majestic smooth and strong.”

(Gray)

**A few generalities**—Generalizations are always risky and insufficient too for the simple reason that exceptions make room everywhere. However, the characteristics of an epic may be summed up as following.

An epic is “a dispassionate recital in dignified rhythmic narrative of a momentous theme or action fulfilled by heroic characters and supernatural agencies under the control of a sovereign destiny,” says Gayley in his ‘Principles of Poetry’. This definition covers nearly all the major examples of an epic. Epic, then, narrates “a momentous theme or action.” Horace confined its subject matter to “the deeds of capains and kings and of tearful wars”. But apart from it, it also covers dignified and great themes, religious, romantic or of whatsoever sort. Great alone is the adjective to epic. “It narrates great actions and depicts great characters in a great way.” (Dixon). Generally it depicts a victorious hero who represents a country or a cause which triumphs with his triumph. In Sanskrit criticism it has been stressed upon that the hero of an epic should be *Dhiroddata i. e.* noble and perfect. Unlike the hero of the tragedy the hero of the epic should be perfectly virtuous and immaculate and of outsoaring nature.

The introduction of machinery is another widely accepted requirement of an epic. Dryden insists upon its indispensability. His assertion that Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, Tasso, Spenser and Milton bereft of their machinery will lose much of their greatness, really contains some grains of truth. Further, the action of an epic should be spacious and worked out into majestic proportions. In comparison with drama it is slow, episodical and achieves no more than a diffuse unity. The larger the scope of human interest and experience, the greater the success of the poem. Amplitude, breadth and inclusiveness are its essential qualities. The last, and perhaps the most important point is that an epic must be choric. It must feel the pulse of the nation it belongs to and voice its sentiments and emotions.

As an expression of art an epic is required to be a perfect achievement from all sides. Dignity and sublimity should here be the catchwords of the qualities of expression. The whole should moreover be governed by the powerful apriori determination which might be sustained and extended upon the whole of the canvass of the poem. Hence epics, as they presuppose a potential language and a mastery over expression, are of a later growth. The Vedas are the oldest extant literature on earth. But they are not epic; they are essentially lyric. Here also the Puranas, the highest achievement in narrative are of later growth. Same is the case with Greek epics. That Homer was an editor and a compiler of songs descending down, from generations, reason does not admit. 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' are masterpieces and not heterogeneous accretions.

**Minerva is born**—But Homer's epics do seem to emerge in panoply like Minerva from the head of Jupiter due to the fact that little account is available of Greek literature before him. First of their kind in Western tradition both 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' are perfect achievements of art and are mature like a great stream which issues straight out of the side of a mountain. 'Iliad' put in a majestic and satisfying structure combines the theme of Trojan war and the personal story of Achilles. The cross currents of mythology and other details join the theme and make it diverse and various. Ample choric in nature, 'Iliad' presents the temper of developed Greece, of the ethical and religious beliefs of a nation as a whole. 'Odyssey', on the other hand, though written with the same vivacity and fecundity of invention, the same strength and life of imagery and colouring, surpasses 'Iliad' in clarity of plot-lines with the result that it has supplied the classical shape for the formal epic. Primarily peaceful and domestic, it depicts Odysseus striving for an ordered and settled home life. In these two epics Homer if he is a channel for earlier habits of thought, he is at once the fountainhead of all persistent and important ones and epic down from Homer, as Dixon puts it, may be defined as "a poem written in imitation of 'Iliad'."

**Epic and Symbolism**—Epic must now wedded Italy and we have Virgil, one of her noblest and worthiest sons. He went back for everything to Homer. Virgil's 'Aeneid' is an expression of rare workmanship and art and like 'Iliad' it depicts the whole Trojan war and then it also depicts the whole way of life in a characteristic Homeric manner. The multiplicity of different

manifestations of the luminous in the 'Aeneid' work powerfully in securing for the poem the variety necessary for the epic poet. But unlike Homer, Virgil's genius was essentially symbolic. Homer's Achilles is a fighter but does not represent the quality of valour. But Virgil's characters embody the same ideas that the plot conveys. In a way the whole plot of 'Aeneid' is symbolic of destruction and rebirth of disintegration and synthesis.

**After Virgil**—None of the Latin epics after Virgil come anywhere near satisfying epic requirements. Lucan's 'De-bello-civili' (whose traditional title is 'Pharsalia'), an unfinished poem in ten books on the wars between Caesar and Pompey, boldly departs from Virgilian precedent in choosing a theme of recent history, in using a hard and unyielding hexameter and in doing away the marvellous.

**Epic and romance**—A whole-hearted attempt was now made by Romans to christianise the epic. But the love of the wonderful and the impossible which had previously lingered upon the Roman mind, now in the medieval days became in Prof. Abercrombie's words "the accepted unconscious metaphysique of the time" as a result of which Christian epics were complete failures. However, the Goths by blending the ideal of holiness with their primitive vigour and Teutonism were able to give it a chivalric form.

**English Minstrelsy from harp to pen 'Beowulf'**—On the islands across the channel the story is different. With the Norman conquest an important leaf in the English book is turned but unfortunately very little of the older literature is extant. However, a graded development from choral dance to epic has been attempted by scholars. The first and perhaps the best extant specimen of Anglo-Saxon epic is 'Beowulf'. Its plot is knit round a motto: "Better is death for everyone of noble birth than unhonoured life." It describes in three sharply defined parts how Beowulf slays a monster which has terrible harrassed, a Danish king, and then how he slays its mother also, and lastly his encounter with a dragon who has ravaged his own kingdom, ending in his own death. The plot obviously lacks a close-knit unity and an amplitude. Its hero is imaginary and hence it is not choric. But inspite of all its blemishes as a minor epic it ranks as the first landmark in the history of English epic.

**The step-son of the English Muse—Langland**—Since the Conquest it is only after 1350 that English stabilizes itself as a



means of literary expression and become capable of voicing the mood of the multitude. It is a happy coincidence that the period was also greatly alive. Hence in its natural course literature, and poetry in particular, became the mouthpiece of the awakening consciousness of the age.

First efflorescence of the English epic genius, Langland's 'Piers Plowman' is, as Prof. Chambers puts it, "a poetry regional and proletarian character". Not sharing the polite notions of poetry as an exercise of rhetoric Langland at once rose to speak for a great body of people at large. Religious in keeping with the tone of the age his poem consists of an allegorical vision of the world and England in particular and of the quest for the three different spiritual states of Do-well, Do-bet and Do-best. His use of allegory is kaleidoscopic and by this he superbly combines the public and the private themes—Above the picture of human society he puts the religious theme of personal salvation through self-sacrifice and love. It has given the allegory an epic weightiness. But always a stock of homilectic is woven in its fabric. Structurally it is shocking as most of the poem concerns with Do-wel and the other two sections have been dwarfed. But its place as a whole is noble and especially the turning points of the plot are magnificent. "Piers Plowman" emerges as the undoubted if imperfect English epic of the Middle ages." (Tillyard).

**Continental Renaissance and English epic**—All the Southern countries of Europe were already awake since the very inception of the fourteenth century and it seems as if they had decided once for all to undo all shackles of ignorance whatsoever. Great Greeks and Latins were translated, imitated and revered. And as soon as the theories of classical epic were restored, the epic divorced the imaginary and the fantastic and the other-worldliness of the medieval romance and unfurled its banner in this world. A natural consequence of the patriotic zest was the choosing of the vernacular for high purposes of Dante which unfortunately later on was given up by Petrarch and Boccaccio in favour of Latin. It is seen that once again these two great poets of Italy revert to the medieval love allegories and prolong and popularise medieval habits of thoughts. But one thing is remarkable that the shape of their works is always classical. Petrarch's 'Africa' is a heroic poem on the African campaigns of the elder Scipio in the second punic war. It is a work strictly based on 'Aeneid' except that it contains nine



and not twelve books. The poem includes epic similes and an episode on the model of Dido. But as an epic it lacks the high and study distinction of style and hence is a failure. Boccaccio also and perhaps in the same way falls short of epic greatness in his 'Filoco', 'Teseida' and 'Ameto'. In Portugal Camoen in his 'Lusiad', a story on Vasco-da Gama's voyage to India, shows a closer adherence to Virgil and the complicated mechanism of the classical epic. It is a purely renaissance fruit and marks a complete break from the middle ages.

In England Renaissance dawned very lately but at the right moment. Medieval habits now fell fast with the decline of the feudal system, but they lingered even upto the fore-part of the reign of Henry VIII. Obviously England had no chance of producing an epic during its worst period of political unrest of the war between the Roses. However, through translations epic criticism for the first time became conspicuous in the works of Minturino and Scalgiar. Petrarch and Boccaccio were followed and as a result the whole fifteenth century became the century of the Latinists and imitators.

**Fantasy weds the heroic—Spenser—**Inspite of the immense vague of the classical theories of epic in the Renaissance, the classical impulses which worked behind 'Frauciade' and 'Lusiad' hardly existed in England. Here, always, along with the tempered allegiance to the classics went a tolerance for the medieval. These two tendencies found the most worthy meeting place in Spenser. In a zest to excel all others, ancient and contemporary, he chose eclectic way. For his 'Faerie Queene' he chose the romantic theme of spiritual pilgrimage and decorated it with the material romances from Ariosto, Malory etc. He planned his epic on the model of Ariosto's 'Orlando Furioso' having a different hero in each book and prince Arthur as the general hero of the whole poem. But on the other hand, he began his action in the middle in the old classical fashion and was assiduous in shaping moral lessons. 'Faerie Queene' is ample and has been planned diversely to envelop the Platonic doctrine, the Aristotelean ethics and the politics and patriotism of the day. The poem foregoes the structural unity of the classical mode but fetches in another unity of distinction which builds and sustains the parts. Spenser's pains in arranging the parts and exercising a conscious will to cover the colossus canvass of the poem are creditable. Inspite of the fact

that much has been rumoured and reasoned against his archaic vocabulary, diffuse language and a very incapable rhyming, Spenser through his expanded style has been able to make it easy reading. His diction, language and rhyme scheme all do possess a power to express epic immensity. As a matter of fact Spenser had a very high standard of rhyming and his ease reminds of Homer's transparency. Not fully choric in its contents, the blend of medievalism, protestantism and political idealism in 'Faerie Queene' hit off the taste of the contemporary people perfectly.

**Epic mode in the age of English**—The age in its very nature suited to the epic expression but its genius was distributed and scattered rather than converging and centripetal. The peak achievement had yet to wait for not less than ten decades. Here, of course, we have a list of chronicler poets whose bent was truly epic but always astrayed by their individual inclinations.

**The English Virgil—Milton**—The English epic genius climaxed in Milton. He is indeed a nodal figure in English epic corresponding to Virgil in Latin. The old strands met in him and out of him new strands emanated. A voracious scholar, he had all the best of the European past to draw. His genius was essentially eclectic but he ground the culled matter in the mill of his mind till he made it his own. That is one reason why the traditional and the contemporary both speak in him. He accepted the Renaissance commonplaces which mostly inclined towards the medieval and built the plot of his 'Paradise Lost' in the medieval tradition, however, derived to provide the essential shape for the biblical story laid down in the book of Genesis. Adam and Eve are none but Every man. But the body of the plot of 'Paradise Lost' is rigidly classic and above all in the 'Odyssey' fashion. Sustained epithets, similes, recurring repetitions and other minor conventionalities also receive in Milton closest attention. He opens his first book following the fashion of 'Iliad', 'Odyssey' and 'Aeneid' by giving a brief of the whole subject matter; gives an invocation of the Muse in the same manner "Of Man's first disobedience.....Sing Heavenly Muse." Then there is also the catalogue of the leaders of the rebellion, an address by Satan to his chiefs in the full council at the Pandemonium in the grand manner. Description of Hell and Hade and the fightings of the epic scale with Homeric and not Cromwellian weapons are other conventionalities which Milton has introduced in his epic in an

attempt to armour his work with all the traditional paraphernalia of an epic. His sense of the marvellous is multifarious. He collects it from the mythology, from medieval romances and from legendary and contemporary superstitions.

The most important thing to be remembered is 'that Milton domesticates his crisis in the *Odyssey*' manner. As a matter of fact, the crisis does not climax, as it is usually thought, in the episode where Eve eats the apple-fruit but it is founded on an irony at Satan's expense which has enabled Milton to extend his plot to cover the corruption of the world through the entry of sin, the consequent despair of Adam and Eve, their penitence before God and lastly their salvation. In the episode where Adam and Eve despair and then make effort for mutual reconciliation Milton moved from the official heroic to the domestic life. In spite of the fact that we possess such specimens in Homer's '*Odyssey*' and Du Barta's '*Judith*' it was a task of much daring. But there is even greater boldness in choosing the blank verse for epic purposes. The style of '*Paradise Lost*' is always wedded to its theme. It is heroic dignified and noble. It carries with it a sort of majesty, stateliness and grandeur. Various planned and enacted it speaks of the religious humanism of the day in a tone and manner better than any other work of his day and thus fulfils the choric condition too though with much largeness. It speaks of a bigger range of justification of the eternal providence to man. Milton achieved Everestine heights in the sphere of English epic.

**Neo-classicism and mock epic**—In Italy Tasso's '*Jerusalem Delivered*' marks a transition between Renaissance and neo-classicism. It is most correct epic after the ancient model. But in France in the following century a somewhat greater stress was laid on the correct theory of epic by Rapine, Boileau and Le Bossu. In England the Restoration period, due to its close contact with French culture and literature, shows a sudden favour for the neo-classical ideal. The attempts of May and Cowley in putting the neo-classical ideas into practice are index of the changing spirit of the time. Pope makes his '*Iliad*' a great poetical interpretation of his age and thus attempts an epic ambition. As a matter of fact on account of the popularity of burlesque the urge to the serious verse in the traditional manner was losing power. The famous writers of burlesque like Boileau, Butler and Cotton influenced the making of the Restoration mind immensely.

The outlook of the later half of the seventeenth and the centuries received a potential change in the critical conception of the epic. Social and political conditions also favoured the light works to serious ones. 'Robinson Crusoe' becomes the official epic of the age. Italy and France had already set the fashion for a parody of the epic form, which later found imitators in England. In this a theme obviously unworthy of the serious epic—an incident quite trifling in itself—is clothed in all the traditional paraphernalia and solemn dignity of the epic form. There was a classical precedent in the 'Battles of the Frogs and Mice', a Greek parody of the 'Iliad'. The finest example in English verse is Pope's 'Rape of the Lock', which celebrates an absurdly trivial theme—the theft of a lock of hair from a girl's head—in the epic manner. Here is the proposition in the usual epic manner—

"What dire offence from amorous causes springs  
What mighty contests rise from trivial things I sing."

The jest lies in the resulting incongruity between theme and treatment: the rendering of a mere piece of mischief, and the family quarrel that followed it, in terms of the sublime. Pope's poem has the complete epic form: there is the usual opening proposition and invocation; the proper celestial machinery; the dramatic episodes; descriptions of battles; and all the other devices of the classical epic. As Hazlitt remarks, "the little has been made great, the great little."

**Epic in the 19th and 20th Centuries**—The very eighteenth century shows obvious signs of the transformation of the epic genius into prose fiction. Defoe had already begun the transfer of the true epic instinct from the verse narrative to the middle class romance. Fielding classed his 'Joseph Andrews' with 'Odyssey' and acclaimed his work as "a comic epic in prose." And it is seen that by the 19th century the real course of the epic had forsaken the traditional verse form for the novel. Except that it is necessarily fulfil the choric condition. The novel does have the immensity, variety and the grand manner of expression of the epic.

However, a glance at the works of the subsequent ages only confirms our disappointment regarding the lesser chances of a production in the traditional grand manner. Cowper's 'Task' shows a strong influence of Milton but it has nothing in it to be called after that great name of an epic. In the same manner Wordsworth's 'Prelude' and 'Excursion' have been largely affected



by the style of 'Paradise Lost'. but they will be the last work for that name. Keats, of course, employs in his 'Hyperion' many of the devices of the classical epic, *e. g.* catalogue of assembled Titans in the 2nd book, description of the great council, the architecture of the classical epic. But this fragment does not ensure an equally great performance in the traditional manner even when deemed in its anticipated fulness. Tennyson's 'Ulysses' and 'Idylls of the King' both written in full epic manner are nothing more than episodes specially the latter work which is a collection of twelve short stories about king Arthur and his Round Table has been overloaded with symbolism and allegory and lacks unity. Arnold's 'Sohrab and Rustam' has Homeric simplicity, directness and severity in its expression and employs epic similes but it lacks the speed and rush. Hardy's 'Dynasts' is a work which presents an enormous gallery of portraits in its 130 scenes of the Napoleonic wars, but is hardly an epic. Prof. Cazamian calls it an "epic drama" but at best it is a collection of short lyrics. Much effort has been directed to prove Bridges' 'Testament of Beauty' an epic but on an honest probing it comes out only to be a philosophical poem in the grand style but over-lengthy and digressive showing beauty as the supreme force in life.

Thus it is clear that the traditional epic is dead after Milton. The conditions for producing the works like 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' no longer exist "They ceased to exist in ancient Greece itself after the Homeric age", as Thompson says, "and they never existed at all in Roman times". In the modern times those conditions have entirely disappeared. Social conditions have so much stressed upon the utilitarian motives of man that rebirth of the traditional epic only appears to be a far : off thinking.

### A SYNOPSIS

1. **A few generalities**—The epic narrates a momentous theme action. It narrates great actions and depicts great characters in a great way. The introduction of machinery is another widely accepted requirement of an epic. Further, the action of an epic should be spacious and worked out into majestic proportions. Again, an epic must be choric. As an expression of art an epic is required to be a perfect achievement from all sides.

2. **Minerva is born**—First of their kind in Western tradition both 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' are perfect achievements of art. Amply



choric in nature, 'Iliad' presents the temper of developed Greece. Primarily peaceful and domestic, 'Odyssey' depicts Odysseus striving for an ordered and settled home life.

**3. Epic and symbolism**—Virgil went back for everything to Homer. But unlike Homer, Virgil's genius was essentially symbolic. In a way the whole plot of 'Aeneid' is symbolic of destruction and rebirth, disintegration and synthesis.

**4. After Virgil**—None of the Latin epics after Virgil come anywhere near satisfying the epic requirements.

**5. Epic and romance**—A whole-hearted attempt was now made by Romans to christianise the epic. But as a result of the love of the wonderful and the impossible Christian epics were complete failures. However the Goths were able to give it a chivalric form.

**6. English minstrelsy from harp to pen**—The first and perhaps the best extent specimen of Anglo-Saxon epic is 'Beowulf'. Its plot lacks a close-knit unity and an amplitude. Its hero is imaginary and hence it is not choric.

**7. The step son of the English Muse**—First efflorescence of the English epic genius. Langland's 'Piers Plowman' is a poetry of regional and proletarian character. Its theme is allegorical.

**8. Continental Renaissance and English epic**—With the revival of the zest of classical epic were restored. Petrarch and Boccaccio once again revert to medieval love allegories. But the shape of their work is classical. A natural influence of the patriotic zest was the choosing of the vernacular for high purposes by Dante. In Portugal Camoens in his 'Lusiad' shows a closer adherence to Virgil.

**9. Fantasy weds the Heroic**—In England, always, along with the tempered allegiance to the classics went a tolerance for the medieval. These two tendencies found the most worthy meeting place in Spenser. Not fully choric in its contents, the blend of medievalism, protestantism and political idealism in 'Faerie Queene' hit-off the taste of the contemporary people perfectly.

**10. The English Virgil**—The English epic genius climaxed in Milton. The theme of 'The Paradise Lost' is based on the Bible. But the body of the plot of 'Paradise Lost' is rigidly classic. Milton domesticates his crisis in the 'Odyssey' manner. There is even greater boldness in choosing the blank verse for epic purposes.

The style of the 'Paradise Lost' is always wedded to its sublime theme.

**11. Neo-classicism and mock epic**—In France in the following century a somewhat greater stress was laid on the correct theory of epic. In England Restoration period shows a sudden favour for the neo-classical ideals. The outlook of the later half of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries received a potential change in the critical conception of the epic. 'Robinson Crusoe' becomes the official epic of the age. It became a fashion to parody the epic form; The finest example in English verse is Pope's 'The Rape of the Lock'.

**12. Epic in the 19th and the 20th centuries**—By the 19th century the real course of the epic had forsaken the traditional verse form for the novel. However, a glance at the works of the subsequent ages only confirms our disappointment regarding the lesser chances of a production in the traditional grand manner.

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## **7. Biography In The 20th Century**

### **Biography defined :**

“The proper study of mankind is man”, says Pope. The basis of the biographical impulse is similarly man’s absorbing interest in man. It was Dryden who first used the term biography, defining it as “the history of particular men’s lives”. Its form was still indeterminate, and for a long time it continued to be a promiscuous collection of varied details not governed by any artistic principle of selection or proportion. Biography, as we understand it to-day, is the story of our fellowmen cast in a literary mould. Its aim is two-fold. It must, on the one hand, tell the truth about its subject and, on the other, be a work of art, a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

### **Blending of Truth and Beauty :**

“A well-written life”, says Carlyle, “is almost as rare as a well-spent one.” A biographer’s job is not an easy one. His path lies up hill with many a thorny bush impeding his progress. The biographer has at once to assimilate the factual material and transmute it into an artistic form. He must strive for truth and for that beauty which comes from a perfect synthesis and portrayal of his subject. Without the former his work becomes mere fiction, without the latter it degenerates into a mere recital of facts. Facts are important but they are not everything. They are, the Galsworthy’s phraseology, the skeleton, which has to be dusted and draped. The biographer uses the magic of his art, the alchemy of his creative imagination to transmute the baser metals of dead bones of skeleton into literary gold. The function of biography is to transmit personality, as Sir Sidney Lee says, to rebuild a living man from dead bones, and the ideal biography would be almost a novel of character with verifiable facts for its basis instead of invented details. The biographer sheds the rainbow colours of his imagination on the life of his subject and makes it at once truer and lovelier than it ever was in life. This supreme task of presenting life beautifully and truthfully, of creating beauty without sacrificing truth, can be achieved only of the most creative imagination.

### **Dispassionate study of both the virtues and faults :**

In the beginning, the biographer had to face another obstacle *viz.* respect for the dead, giving rise to the doctrine of *De Mortuis nil nisi bonum* (speak no ill of the dead). The attitude of excessive reverence and awe tended to turn biography into panegyrics and unnecessary glorification of the dead. Carlyle's 'Hero and Hero worship' is a glowing example of this tendency. The lives of the saints written in the Middle Ages are hagiography rather than biography. Even some of the great biographies produced during the Victorian age tend to eulogize the dead rather than present an unvarnished and truthful picture of them. As a reaction against the Victorian tendency to idealize, the recent biographers have inclined to emphasize the foibles of the person concerned. One method may result in an undeserved eulogy, the other in an unkind satire, and neither will give a full and faithful account of the man and his career. The biography should be no more a panegyric than a diatribe. It should be a faithful picture of its subject, with both his virtues and his faults, neither praising the former nor condemning the latter, but studying both dispassionately.

### **Study of the subject from within and without :**

Biography studies its subject from both without and within: it is on account of his achievements and of his personality. Formerly, one would concentrate on the external achievement of the great, but modern psychology has shown that the drama going on in the world of the spirit and sub-conscious is the true index of man's character. This great principle was first emphasized upon by the great biographer Plutarch. "Not is it always", says Plutarch, "in the most distinct achievement that men's virtues of views may be best discerned, but very often an action of small note or short saying or jest shall distinguish a person's real character more than the great sieges, or the most important battles." This is how the modern biographer lays stress on the minute shades and nuances of character and feeling and brings out the essence of the person whose life story he intends to portray.

### **Elusive subject-matter :**

Perhaps the most important difficulty in the way of the biographer is that it is scarcely possible within the covers of a book to certain a whole life in all its phases—physical, intellectual moral—doing full justice to each. Life is too elusive to be so

easily confined within the narrow room of a biographical record. As W. H. Dunn says of biography, "Perhaps no other form of composition is so difficult : no other deals with such elusive material. Other forms of composition deal with thought and emotion, but biography deals with the source of thought and emotion, with Man himself in his inward and outward manifestations. Who is sufficient for such a task ?"

### **A. G. Gardiner :**

English biography has a long ancestry, its earliest manifestation is found in the ancient runic inscriptions, celebrating the lives and exploits of heroes and legendary warriors, but its first literary fruition in Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History'. Then came some of the early great biographers—Walton, Johnson, Boswell, Southey, Lockhart, Carlyle, Froude and Macaulay. With them biography became an established literary genre—a work of conscious and deliberate art. But it is in the twentieth century that this literary form has found new and varied expression and attained unprecedented perfection. In the work of the modern biographers there is a singular absence of hero-worship, frank appraisal of truth, however unpalatable, and a searching analysis of the innerman of their biographies. With 'Prophets, Priests and Kings' in 1908 and 'Pillars of Society' in 1913 A. G. Gardiner ushered in a new era in English biography. These little and interesting sketches of eminent Englishmen are written without any edifying or reverential motive. Their principal aim is to delight rather than to instruct. The author does not suffer from any awe in the presence of the greatest figures of that age—all characters from Lloyd George to Charlie Chaplin are viewed with a remarkable freedom and familiarity which is refreshing to us but must have shocked the Victorians. Apart from this new approach, the biographical sketches are remarkable for their literary grace and their author's command of the pictorial word and phrase.

### **Lytton Strachey :**

But it was Lytton Strachey who brought about perfection in the art of biography with the publication of his 'Eminent Victorians'. He broke into Victorian strong-hold without apology. The book became very popular. Six reprints were called for in seven months, and it attracted the attention of the public not only in Britain but in America also. Lytton Strachey had salutary things to say, he said them provocatively and without romantic embroi-



dery. He did not set much store by sheer scholarship which had led earlier biographers to collect a stupendous mass of material and facts. He, on the other hand, brushes aside all unnecessary factual material and believes in concentrating on the major points so as to throw vivid light on his theme. Above all, he showed that many of the Victorians worshipped as supermen by their contemporaries, were ordinary men in many respects; the gods had feet of clay. Gordon, the hero of Khartoom, was given to heavy drinking; Cardinal Manning lacked clarity of thought. Florence Nightingale was not the fairy and goddess of popular imagination, but a practical woman with indomitable will and tenacity of purpose. There was nothing delicate and sentimental about her; she was a strong woman who battled against the government and removed the serious abuses in the Army Medical Service. This was a revelation to the people, for Strachey told something which was new and unsuspected. The great Victorians who came into life in the pages of this book are not shadowy beings, mere abstractions of vice or virtue, but real men and women, possessing both strength and weakness.

Strachey followed up his success with the epoch-making 'Life of Queen Victoria' which is decidedly one of the great books of the modern age. The portrait of the Queen, the Prince Consort, Lord Melbourne and Stockmar are the creations of the same mocking irony, scoffing temper and irreverent attitude as also vivid imagination which had characterised the 'Eminent Victorians'. It is remarkable that the Queen is not depicted as the flawless idol of her contemporaries but just a woman with earthly features, with all the womanly faults—self assertion, petulance and obduracy. She has, of course, not lost all her charm but the reader's admiration is not blind but tempered with a rational approach.

Strachey's biographies are remarkable both as a literary feat and as a representation of personal history. As tales of men and women, these are absorbing from first to last, yet there is less in the tale than in the telling. All these lives had been written before but no similar thrill had previously resulted. The new brilliance and new force came from Strachey's achievement of his purpose to make biography in England an art instead of an industry.

**Strachey's followers : Emi Ludwig :**

Emi Ludwig, the German biographer, has a more active and poetical imagination in recapturing the personality of his

biographical subjects. He writes with rare inspiration, with the help of a wonderful intuition. He "benigs with the concept of a character and searches the archives for what remains at bottom, the corroboration of an intuition." For facts are merely so much plastic material which he is able to shape with the help of a highly alive and pictorial imagination.

Ludwig's 'Napoleon' published in 1925 brought him world wide fame. Before this he had published 'Bismark' in 1911 and several other book—'Wilhelm', 'The last of the Kaiser', 'Goethe', 'The son of Man', 'Three Titan', 'Genius and Character' 'Leaders of Europe'—came out in quick succession and showed Ludwig to be one of the most prolific writers of the age. All these books are packed with factual material and seems that their author has put in infinite labour in assimilating and sifting such a stupendous mass of information. In the earlier books the scholarship and learning appears to be rather oppressive and weighs down on the subject but in 'Napoleon' and 'Willam II' there is complete mastery of the subject. The learning has been well chewed and digested and used with great pictorial and dramatic effect. The chief merit of these books is the impressionistic and pictorial nature of the narrative. Ludwig paints, in a few words, illuminating scenes and situations to throw a flood of light on the character of his heroes. His grasp of character is remarkable and the portrait of Napoleon painted by him is colourful. It is in sharp contrast to the image one finds in the pages of Abbott's 'Napoleon'. That is the picture of Napoleon by one of his mute adorers and admirers while Ludwig's portrait is the work of one who combines in himself the poet, the historian and the novelist.

### **Andre Maurois :**

Maurois's devotion to English subjects in his biographical studies has made him almost a figure in modern English literature as well as in French. His works include 'Disraeli', 'King Edward VII and His Times', 'Ariel' and 'The Life of Byron'. 'Disraeli' is a very interesting and sympathetic study of the Victorian statesman who could succeed better with the Queen than his rival Gladstone. 'King Edward VII' is rather sketchy, but the character of the King, and the life of pleasure and indulgence in his court circles are all admirably portrayed. Unlike Ludwig he is not oppressed with too much scholarship and factual data. He also created

what has been rightly termed fictional biography or biographical novel, divested of the weight of dates, names and places and yet presenting the essential truth about his characters. His most notable achievement in this kind of biography is 'Ariel', a life of Shelley, light graceful and true. In the pages of this remarkable book Shelley appears as a simple, lovable human being, without the aura of his luminous poetry. 'The Life of Byron' is written in the old tradition; it is not in the form of a novel as 'Ariel'. On the contrary, it is heavily documented and supported by a lot of reliable factual data. Yet the author's deep insight into character has enabled him to paint a very real and appealing portrait of Byron.

### Other important biographers :

Lord David Cecil has also followed Strachey and his style becomes very pointed, sententious and antithetical. His masterpiece 'The Stricken Deer', the life of Cowper is one of the best fictional biographies in English literature. The method of Nevillie Cardus is very much different from Strachey's. He, not being endowed with Strachey's detachment and irony, idolizes the object of his writing and he is enthusiastic, poetic, lyrical even historical about him. Literary historians call him "lyrical Boswell". Among other biographers inspired by the example of Strachey are Edith, Sitwell, who produced another 'Life of Queen Victoria'. John Buchanan, author of the 'King's Grace', Laurence Binyon, responsible for the admirable study of 'Akbar', the Moghul Emperor, and Phillip Guedella, the most successful of them all, and the writer of 'Palmerston' which is a detailed, vivid and ironical study of one of the great periods in English history.

In all these writers there blazes the spirit of Strachey, with his mocking irony, impatience with Victorian prudery and a fierce desire to know the truth and express it fearlessly. They are also much influenced by modern psychology, with the consequent emphasis on the inner being, the sub conscious. Their technique and method are essentially pictorial and impressionistic. Above all they have great imaginative sympathy for their subjects and so, in the words of Gerald Bullet, the aim of modern biography may be thus expressed : "Where imaginative sympathy goes hand-in-hand with a wealth of factual knowledge, biography becomes a creative art without ceasing to submit itself to the discipline of attested facts."

## Biography in the Twentieth Century

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8. Emi Ludwig possessed a keen and active imagination. His 'Napoleon' brought him world-wide fame. In his earlier biographies he has supplied us a stupendous mass of factual information. The chief merit of his books is the impressionistic and pictorial nature of the narrative.

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## 8. The Classical Influences on English Literature

Britain has never been an isolated island except geographically. English literature, like England belongs to Europe and its history has been determined by that connexion. The invaders of Roman Britain brought with them their language and even some fragments of a literature, of which it may fairly be said that they contained the promise of most that was to come. But this promise would never have been fulfilled, or at any rate would never have been fulfilled in the same way, in isolation from the rest of Europe. "The history of our literature may almost be described as the history of what happened when it came in contact with the European tradition, the main current of which flows through Rome from ancient Greece." (J. A. K. Thomson). The classical influences on English literature are so strong that it is not an exaggeration to say that without the classical background English literature would not have been what it is to-day.

### Chief Characteristics of Classical Literature :—

In order to grasp completely classical background of English literature we must know that is meant by classical literature and what are its characteristics. By classical literature is meant whatever has survived in Greek and Latin from Homer to the beginning of the Middle Ages. The spirit embodied in classical literature is too protean to find adequate expression in a word or a phrase. But if we are required to describe it in a word or two, we may say that this literature is animated in a higher degree than other literatures by a love for, and faith in, reason. It was a Greek conviction that into art there entered an intellectual element, which was essential to it. A Greek had the feeling that a work of art ought to mean something; to him it did not appear enough that it should stir the emotions or touch the imagination. He went further, he did not think it could stir the emotions or the imagination in a genuinely artistic way, unless it embodied an intelligible design. He was convinced that it must be consciously designed from beginning to end, even if its inspiration came from something beyond or below our consciousness. A work of art so designed will have its parts carefully related to each other and to the whole. To have this feeling for proportion involves the ability of seeing not merely as it were both sides of a work of art but both sides of a question.

The Greek mind was profoundly antithetical. It was this power of seeing and feeling contrasted points of view which enabled the Greeks to create their drama. Now we come to another characteristic of classical literature—restraint. The restraint there is due not to the absence but to the presence of strong feeling. It is the counterpart in literature of the virtue which the Greeks called *soprosyne* which may nearly be translated in English as 'temperance' or 'self-control'. Applied to literature, *soprosyne* brings with it a hatred of excess in statement, in colour, in ornament. The Greeks objected to the plenty of colour and assertion because they thought it weakened the total effect of a work of art and dissipated instead of concentrating the inward fire. Another characteristic of ancient literature is the importance it attached to the 'kinds' (Latin genera, French genres). It was assumed that there were certain kinds of art—forms into which an artist was bound to cast his material according to the nature of his subject. The genres were not to be mixed. The conception of a limited number of self-contained forms is naturally accompanied by a profound respect for tradition. One other note of classical literature must be touched on—its almost exclusive concern with the human. 'The proper study of Mankind is Man' is a very Greek, and for the matter of that a very Roman, sentiment. While other nations were preoccupied by considerations of God and the supernatural or by the beneficent or hostile aspects of nature, it was man himself that interested the Greeks. Now it is true that in Homer there are frequent appearances of gods, there are even monsters and magic. But the gods look and behave like human beings, the monsters are as far as possible humanised, the magic is touched in very lightly. The humanism of the Greeks entered into all their thinking and feeling, of which their literature is merely the expression.

### **Classical influences in the Middle Ages :—**

The influences of the classics upon medieval literature was indirect rather than direct. The Middle Ages, with rare exceptions, did not drink inspiration from the classics at the fountain head but at such streams as trickled, generally thin and muddy, through the intervening stretches of Low Latin. There was of course always some direct influence and towards the close of the period it became considerable. But there were times when it almost vanished. Generally speaking it varied with the state of scholarship. There was very little scholarship indeed between Bede and Henry II and

throughout that long period it proved difficult to keep alive any knowledge of Latin at all. Therefore, the influence of the classics came in the main through French channels. France became the interpreter of the classical world to England, where after the Norman Conquest most educated persons could read and speak the French language or the Norman variety of it. And, as France was, if not the creator, the disseminator of the medieval spirit in its literary expression, we find English literature in the later Middle Ages accepting the French interpretation of the classical world almost without question.

The influence of the classics on literature was transformed by the medieval spirit. Hence it is that medieval writers fasten with especial delight on whatever is marvellous in the classical literature known to them. It is not the history of Alexander the Great that interests them, it is the hotch-potch of oriental fables that we find in the 'Pseudo-Callisthenes'. It is not the historical Caesar they care about, but the Caesar of legend, who was born like Macbeth, and had a horse with human feet. In a word the classics were read for what was wonderful in them, and the wonders were all believed. But this unclassical and unmodern conception of the universe as a theatre of miracles and marvels, although it is what chiefly differentiates the medieval from other ages, is only one of the other distinguishing characteristics. There is for example the medieval conception of chivalry, in particular the conception of chivalrous or romantic love. And through this transforming medium the Middle Ages looked upon the loves of antiquity. Then there was the Christian sentiment, To the Middle Ages ancient poetry took on the aspect of a siren—the beautiful singer to whom the wise and virtuous man must stop his ears. The general tendency was to feel that there was something illicit in the pleasure found in reading the lovely fictions of the old pagan world. A further cause which militated against the strictly literary influence of the classics was the insensitiveness of the Middle Ages to the beauty of form and style which is after all what gives most of its value to the poetry of Virgil and Horace and Ovid. This insensitiveness was partly the result of defective scholarship and partly of the fact that the Middle Ages looked on the ancient literature for the information it conveyed. The interest of the Middle Ages in the classics was more utilitarian than aesthetic.



It was only after the Norman Conquest, indeed long after it, when education had begun to spread to at least a section of the laity, that we begin to observe what it was that the English people, or at least the privileged classes, delighted in most. It is all summed up in Chaucer, although to get the picture complete we must take into account 'Piers Plowman' as expressing at least what was being felt by the unprivileged. Chaucer, to whom may be added Gower, gives a sufficiently representative conspectus of what the Middle Ages liked in the classics. We are only to glance through Chaucer to see how often he is content with mere resumes of love stories, of 'tragedies' of historical and legendary persons, even with simple lists of names, drawn from antiquity. Consider the Monk's Tale, 'The House of Fame', the 'Legende of Good Women'. The appetite for the kind of knowledge supplied in these poems is boundless, but no feeling is shown for the beauty of the telling in the original Latin. Yet if the original had been in French, Chaucer would have felt its beauty in every nerve of his being.

#### **The Renaissance :—**

The Renaissance is a familiar term to denote the very remarkable change that touched the mind, and through the mind the literature, of Europe at the end of the Middle Ages. But we are concerned with only one aspect of it, that which suggested its name, the 'rebirth' of learning and with its effect upon English literature. The kind of learning that was reborn was of course classical, especially the study of Greek. The home of Renaissance was Italy where the way was already paved by Dante. But the real credit of leading this movement goes to Boccaccio and Petrarch who have much of the spirit of Renaissance mingling with their medievalism. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453 the Greek scholars fled to Italy. They created a new interest in ancient Greek literature. Classical literature woke into life after a long period of slumber. There was a new appreciation of beauty and exactness of form in the great classic authors. Again, there was a revival of ancient Greek ideas and ideals, ending in some cases in a sort of cult of paganism. Moreover, there was the rise of what has been called Humanism, ending in some cases in the assertion of the individual at the expense of the community. There are the general characteristics of the Renaissance. But it tended to differ with the different national characters of the countries it visited. In England the Renaissance entered in the closing years of the fifteenth century.

In England it affected literature later and more slowly than it did on the Continent. It was in an age enriched by the treasures of Italian and French literature that Renaissance affected literature in England. Its delayed influence proved beneficial in other respects also. In England its progress was coincided by the movement of the Reformation. The Renaissance with its aspiration for beauty and its cult of every kind of energy was prone to engender immorality and laxity in manners, as it really had done in Italy. These unhealthy forces were held in check by the movement of Reformation. In fact the Elizabethan literature is the splendid outcome of this ally of Renaissance and Reformation.

In tracing the classical influences on the Elizabethan age with its abundant and varied output—an age moreover in which almost every author had a tincture of classical knowledge—it is impossible to do more than make some general remarks. Let us begin with Thomas Moore. The conception of Moore's 'Utopia' is not new. Plato's 'Republic' has given a description of an ideal state, and Moore certainly knew a good deal about the 'Republic'. It is also certain that he had long studied and enjoyed what he could get hold of among the works of Lucian, including the 'True History'. That he was thinking of Lucian will appear almost certain in the introductory chapters, whatever one may think of the later and more serious parts of the book. It has often been suggested that the English Renaissance owes much of its special character to the famous Dutch scholar Erasmus, an intimate friend of Moore. His most influential writings were the 'Adages', the 'Colloquies', the 'Praise of Folly' and his edition of the New Testament with his Latin paraphrase of the Greek. Although these works are in Latin, they were for a long time the familiar reading of all educated Englishmen. They rivalled in popularity the ancient classics themselves.

Before we proceed to mention classical influences on Elizabethan authors, we should keep in mind that English classical scholarship made very little progress during the sixteenth century compared with the achievements first of Italy and then of France. Whatever the reasons, the primacy in scholarship passed from Italy to France. There was also a brilliant Renaissance in Spain, the leaven of which worked in English literature. "And on the whole it must be said that, while there was a great increase of classical scholarship in England, particularly at the Universities, and the scholars now went to the genuine classics for the material of their

studies, English authors fell into a habit of absorbing classical influences rather through French and Spanish than directly."

As for Spenser, it is evident that he was a good classical scholar for an Englishman of his time. Classical influences are strong upon him. They are evident as early as the 'Shepheardes Calender'. In it Spenser probably was following Theocritus, whom he knew, if not in the original Greek, in some version; in Theocritus he found sufficient precedent for the use of rustic language and the description of rustic life. In spite of the dream-like element in so much of his work Spenser was a thoroughly English person, and it was an English instinct in him to go for the matter of his pastorals to the countryside he knew. At the same time there is an odd and not disagreeable mixture of rural England and classical divinities and conventions. The characters have often Greek names and seem to know a good deal of classical mythology. Classical elements run through all Spenser's work, including such parts of it as, like the 'Faerie Queen' itself, appear utterly unclassical in conception, structure and metre. Spenser's conception of Beauty and Love, as expressed more particularly in the 'Foure Hymnes', was very influenced by that of Plato whose 'Symposium' and 'Phaedrus' he had read.

It has often been remarked that Sir Philip Sidney is a typical figure of the English Renaissance at its best, and the statement is true. He was something of a scholar and he was deeply imbued with classical influences as they came to him modified by the Renaissance temperament and the Renaissance interpretation of antiquity. His 'Arcadia' shows the influence of Xenophon's 'Cyropaedia'. As for the style of the book it is distinctly classical in the length and involution of its sentences. And all through there are the classical allusions which no Renaissance book could be without.

The native drama of England became in time a thing peculiarly English; but, so far as it has a single origin, it must be sought in certain performances organised by the medieval Church, the words of which were Latin. The Latin had ultimately to yield to the vernacular, but it was there first. Nor was the classical drama by any means forgotten in the Middle Ages, though it had not much effect upon English practice. The Renaissance brought a change. The native drama of the time was despised, at any rate among those who could read Latin, in comparison with Seneca for

Tragedy and Plautus and Terence for Comedy. But the classical drama proved a failure and was ultimately substituted by what is known as the romantic drama. However, the impact of the classical drama upon the kind that did succeed, and above all upon Shakespeare, is too important to be passed over without some comment. Of the plays believed to be composed by Shakespeare no less than seven, not counting 'Cymbeline', have a classical subject. They are 'Titus Andronicus', 'Julius Caesar', 'Timon of Athens', 'Antony and Cleopatra', 'Troilus and Cressida', 'Coriolanus' and 'Pericles Prince of Tyre'. Of these 'Titus Andronicus' is a typical Senecan tragedy with all its rhetorical emphasis and horrific incidents. With this conception of classical tragedy in his mind Shakespeare came upon North's translation of Plutarch. Here he found not only a dramatic vision of history but credible human beings, not the shadowy type that stalk upon the Senecan stage. What Plutarch did for Shakespeare was to give him the means of seeing the great ancients as they really were. For in general Shakespeare follows Plutarch with great fidelity.

In John Milton, so far as England is concerned, the classical Renaissance culminates. Classical scholarship was not with Milton an end in itself. From his youth he had dedicated himself to poetry. He had two things to master—the technique and the material of poetry. Like every other educated man of his time he believed that the classics were still the unapproached models of style and, in their mythology and philosophy, the great sources of poetical material. Classical influences are visible upon Milton from the very beginning of his poetic career. 'Comus' is full of classical reminiscence and shows an unequalled sensitiveness to every exquisite turn and phrase of ancient poetic style. 'Lycidas' is written with all the conventions of the Pastoral. 'Paradise Lost' is a highly personal thing but many classical elements have gone to its making and above all the epic style of Virgil. Milton equals Virgil in the architecture of verse-paragraph. Then in his love of making one line overflow into another Milton resembles Virgil. There is one more important affinity between the Miltonic and Virgilian style. They are both personal in contrast with the impersonal style of Homer. The structure of the 'Paradise Lost' is also designed on classical model. Following the epic tradition Milton employed in 'Paradise Lost' many conventional devices such as the use of epic machinery and the Homeric type of simile. In 'Paradise Regained'



which is the source of nearly all his best poetry, that natural objects have a life and almost a personality of their own, has an odd resemblance to the feelings which must have inspired Greek mythology, but never found clear expression in Greek or in any other literature known to him before he gave it that expression in English. His 'Ode to Duty' is as fine an example of the classical style as we shall easily find in the language—pure, unadorned, lucid, alive with concentrated emotion. It is certainly more truly classical than the Odes of Gray. 'Laodamia', greatly inferior in poetic intensity, has a noble simplicity of style that may fairly be called classical. One might make a list of such exceptions, but they do not alter the fact that he does not any more than Coleridge or Scott or Byron draw inspiration from the classics.

Shelley read Greek eagerly and it was a permanent source of inspiration to him. The idea of a golden age which would return if men would only abolish war and its causes, and follow their natural instincts crops up quite often in ancient literature. The sects of the Stoics maintained that all men were citizens of one city—the City of the World or even the City of God—and urged them to live according to nature. Thus even if Godwin had never written a word Shelley was able to find in the classics material to feed the flame of his enthusiasm. Shelley was very much influenced by Platonism. His 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' is Platonic in conception. The strong sense of an immortal world behind the veil of the mortal (which is the essence of Platonism) operates powerfully in a great deal of Shelley's finest verse, in 'Alastor', in 'Epipsychidion' and much else. Some of his most exquisite poetry is inspired by sheer delight in Greek mythology. Such is the 'Hymn of Pan', the, 'Arethusa', poem and other things almost as good. The 'Eclogues' especially the tenth, helped to inspire 'Adonais', but the general conception of Shelley's poem is more indebted to the 'Lament for Bion' of the Greek bucolic poet Moschus. Bion himself had written a 'lament for Adonis', which also was familiar to Shelley and probably suggested the title of his own elegy. But the most massive evidence of the inspiration drunk by Shelley from Greek poetry is 'Prometheus Unbound'. 'Prometheus Unbound' is more essentially Greek in spirit, though less in form, than 'Samson Agonistes', which is really the tragedy not of Samson but of John Milton. 'Prometheus Unbound' strikes one not indeed as like a drama of the Periclean age, but as like what the Periclean drama might have been in the hands



of a great lyrical poet, who was not writing for the stage. 'Hellas' is obviously fashioned on the model of the 'Persians' of Aeschylus. Its famous final chorus derives immediately from the fourth eclogue of Virgil. But the idea is Greek and was borrowed by Virgil himself.

Shelley said, "Keats was a Greek." Keats could not read Greek spirit came to him through translations, book of references and Greek sculpture. A critic has said that 'Hyperion' "is in poetry what the Elgin marbles are in sculpture"; and it is certain that the "calm grandeur" of Greek art, its majesty and symmetry and simplicity, its economy of ornament and subordination of parts to the whole, came to Keats through the sight of Elgin marbles. This influence is most plain in the odes 'On Indolence' and 'On a Grecian Urn'. Keats was temperamentally Greek. The Hellens were lovers of beauty; so is Keats. To him, as to them, the expression of beauty is the ideal of all art; and that such an ideal should be full, lofty and severe is due to the fact that beauty finds its expression in the fullest development of all that goes to make up human perfection. He is a Greek, too, in his manner of personifying the powers of Nature. He sees the spirit of Autumn, as a Greek would have seen, in human form of firm outlines. The world of Greek paganism lives again in his verse; with all its frank sensuousness and joy of life, with all its mysticism and deep hearted questioning of natural world.

Tennyson studied the classical art in the classics themselves. 'Ulysses' is based on a classical subject and its style has a good deal of Homeric majestic simplicity. His most successful work in the epic vein, 'The passing of Arthur' is only a fragment Tennyson lacked dramatic power. It is interesting to see what he made of Homer. He has translated a passage from the 'Iliad' with almost literal fidelity, but the result is pure Tennyson, utterly unhomeric in its movement, but very fine in its own way and perhaps the best bit of Homeric translation we have. But there is one ancient poet, classical though not Attic, with whom Tennyson has a remarkable affinity. This is Theocritus. What Tennyson could do in direct imitation of Theocritus is shown by the eclogue, inserted in the 'Princess', which begins: "Come down, O Maid, from yonder mountain height." 'Idylls of the King' are based on the poems specifically called 'epyllia' which are included among the work of Theocritus. The 'epyllia' deal in a quasi-epic manner with episodes

drawn from the old mythology, just as the 'Idylls of the king' deal not with the Arthurian legend as a whole but with episodes drawn from it.

Though Browning translated two plays of Euripides and the 'Agamemmon' of Aeschylus, he was evidently incapable of reflecting the genuine Greek spirit. But the case with Arnold is quite different. He represented, often in practice, always by precept, the tendencies of classical art as no one else had done before in English literature. He was a born classicist : a lover of shapeliness; restraint, clarity simplicity. However, he was not always successful in translating his precepts into practice. 'Merope', a tragedy on the Greek model, is a failure. The poem where Arnold's theories are most successfully carried out in practice and where also he attains to a high level of poetic excellence, is 'Sohrab and Rustam'. It has an artistic design and structure, a restraint both of style and sentiment, and a rugged simplicity, of diction suiting its barbaric theme. It is a perfect design perfectly executed, recalling frequently the stateliness of Homer, Sophocles, and Virgil. He presents one of the best examples in English of the classical spirit—of its self-possession, its freedom from vagueness, its naked statement. A poet of life's "sick hurry" and "divided aims", he never loses the cool balance of his own mind. The stream of his verse runs ever placidly like his own Oxus "out of the mist and hum" of Victorian England. He is classical in his use of Homeric similes also. Finally in 'Thyrsis' and 'The Scholar Gipsy' there is an approximation to the classical pastoral.

The pre-Raphaelite poets were, with the exception of Swinburne, not greatly indebted to Greek or Latin. Swinburne was a good Greek scholar and had great sympathy with the Greek spirit. This may be seen in 'Atlanta in Calydon', 'Erechtheus', 'Anactoria', 'Itylus' and other poems of his inspired by Greek subject. His sense of form never leaves him, nor his purity of diction; and so far he is classical. But his inability to control his inspiration is the very opposite of classical. Nevertheless his classical background was of the utmost value to him; he is always at his best when he has a classical subject. He also attempted the Pastoral Elegy in his poem on the death of Baudelaire, which may be compared with 'Thyrsis'.

#### **Fading of the classical influence :—**

The trend of contemporary literature is not classical; it is perhaps even anti-classical. The causes of this change are numerous.

The chief no doubt was the appearance of formidable rivals to the classical not merely in the sciences but in the study of modern subject in general and particularly of modern languages. What has affected the position of the classics is the interest in other studies. The ability to read Latin or Greek with any ease or pleasure cannot be acquired except by protracted effort, for which the schools could no longer afford the time, if modern subject were not be neglected. To neglect their own literature, not to mention that of France or Germany, for the sake of struggling laboriously through Euripides or Virgil seemed to most people extraordinarily foolish.

The change of course has been gradual. There are some authors, Bridges for instance and Housman and Gilbert Murray, who have lived all their lives with the classics. They carry on the Victorian tradition, even the metrical experiments of Bridges, like those of Sidney and Spenser, being based on classical practice. A large proportion of Bridges' work was actually on classical subjects and all of it is full of classical reminiscence. In all Bridges' best work (which does not include the 'Testament of Beauty') the diction is choice and often exquisite, the form succinct and precise, so that frequently attains a portion of that Dorique delicacy which Wotton discovered in the verses of youthful Milton. The finish and perfection of Housman's work is extraordinary. To say things with clearness, brevity and simplicity is the great aim of the most characteristic classical art. No fair critic can deny the clearness, brevity and simplicity of Housman's style. He is not exactly like any ancient poet, though he sometimes recalls the finer epigrams of the 'Greek Anthology'; he has more of the form than the spirit of the ancients. He is more directly influenced by Heine than by any Greek or Roman. But no scholar can fail to see the pervading influence of classical literature in all that he wrote. Indeed it could not be otherwise, for his critical work on the ancient, especially the Latin, poets is quite of the first order. Gilbert Murray is no doubt best known by his translations from the Greek dramatists, but all his writing is informed by a spirit of liberal humanism, which is characteristically Greek. Massfield has written a prose drama on the subject of Pompey the Great and a verse drama on the defeat of the Spanish Armada which clearly owes much to the 'Persians' of Aeschylus. Even when he has not a classical subject he sometimes reminds one of the ancients. Thus many of the similes in 'Right Royal' make one think of Homer's. It is not easy to discuss the

the classical influences are not much marked. But there is something ironical in the fact that the finest passages of it are exactly those which owe their inspiration to the classical writers and not to the Bible. 'Samson Agonistes' is based on Greek model. The play is devoid of dramatic tension and interest. But as dramatic poetry it is magnificent: It is the only English tragedy of the classical type sufficiently in the grand style to be put on a level as mere writing with the Greek masterpieces. In spite of its Hebraic, and even more English, spirit it is one of the most classical poems of considerable length in English literature.

### **The Restoration Period and the Eighteenth Century :—**

During the first half of the Seventeenth century the supremacy of France in classical scholarship had its effect on French literature. The school of writers known as the *Ple' iade* under its leader Ronsard sought to accommodate the French language to the graces of classical style. They particularly affected 'odes' in the manner of Horace and Pindar. The work thus produced was often exquisite or at least charming, but the *Ple' iade* was addicted to prettinesses and conceits, which are not in the best Attic taste. The somewhat artificial prettiness enraged Malherbe, who thought that poetry should be the flower of common sense. His opinion prevailed and was later defended by Boileau. He maintained that his view was the true lesson taught by the classics. To live in accordance with nature is the great maxim of the ancient sages, who added that this is the same thing to live in accordance with reason. The ancient poets Boileau considered, believed this and acted upon their belief. "To copy nature is to copy them", says Pope, and they are models of good sense as well as noble inspiration. With this view there was another combined, largely adopted from Horace. The good poet must be 'correct', that is permit himself no licences of diction or metre. Such was the classical doctrine that came to England. What the age admired then was good sense, pointedly expressed, and an almost geometrical regularity of form with a corresponding regularity of metre. It must be allowed that these things are to be found in classical literature and the eighteenth century view is not so much wrong as inadequate. It is a view that had the right to be expressed, and if the results were disappointing in poetry they were wholly splendid and salutary in prose.

Dryden and Pope are the main representative of the 'correct' school of poetry. Dryden's most eminent achievement was in satire.



Upto his time satire was composed under the impression that it ought to be rugged, if not uncouth. Dryden saw—and here the new doctrine of ‘correctness’ was entirely helpful—that, to be effective, satire cannot be too highly polished. Dryden then did not take much from his English precursors, but went direct to the Latin models, above all to Juvenal, who suited him better than Horace. Dryden has got the invective force of Juvenal, his inexhaustible variety and resource, his moral superiority to the men he assails. Pope has not this superiority ; he is jealous and spiteful. He takes Dryden’s weapon of personal satire, polishes it still further and envenoms it. But of course it all goes back in the long run to the ancient satirists.

The danger inherent in the cult of correctness is that the correctness is apt to be pursued for its own sake. This is sometimes the case with Dryden and Pope and it is more so with their followers. Their imitators had in general little to say, and then the inadequacy of the doctrine was revealed. ‘The emptiness of it began pretty soon to make itself felt, and this enabled Thompson even in Pope’s life-time to make a success with his ‘Season’. But the classical influence on Thompson is stronger than is generally thought. The style is obviously affected by Milton is more Latin than anything in Pope. Beyond Milton he looked to Virgil, for he could not have written the Seasons without thinking of the Georgics’, Thompson then, while he may have started a ‘return to nature’, was not leading a rebellion against the classics. What he did rebel against was the tyranny of heroic couplet. This revolt did not find a recruit in Johnson who reverted to the Dryden Pope tradition. Johnson’s two famous satires, ‘London’ and ‘The Vanity of Human Wishes’ continue the work of Dryden and Pope in their manner but with sufficient independence. His model was Juvenal. ‘London’ is an imitation of the third satire of Juvenal, ‘The Vanity of Human Wishes’ a like imitation of the tenth. They are not so brilliant as their originals or as the work of Dryden and Pope; but they have a greater moral dignity than any of the three, and to express this dignity was a real contribution to English satire.

It must be allowed that both in extent and in accuracy of classical learning Johnson was excelled by his younger contemporary Gray. In spite of this Gray is usually represented as turning his back upon the classical tradition. It is true that Gray discards the Popian couplet; it is not true he has ceased to be classical. His



style is more steeped in classical reminiscence than that of any other poet since Milton. The inversions and personifications of which he is so fond are merely external evidences of a classical cast of thought which could only be the result of living daily and intensely with the Latin poets. He knew the Greek poets too. In the famous 'Elegy the setting is English but the sentiments and their expression remember the classics at every turn. The 'Hymn to Adversity', which has a special interest as having suggested Wordsworth's 'Ode to Duty,' was itself pretty clearly suggested by some lines to Nemesis by Mesomedes, a Greek poet of the second century. Thus Gray, and we must say the same of Collins, did not really divert the stream of classical influence. The century remained faithful to the classical tradition. Even Blake and Burns do not attack it; they are merely outside it.

Though the eighteenth century boasted of "reforming our numbers", it was far more successful in reforming prose. The century provided a standard prose. The foundations of a plain, lucid and conversational style were laid by Dryden. How far he had any classical writer in mind is doubtful. Yet consciously or not he was leading English into what is the main tradition of classical prose. The prose of Swift with its strong sense of form, its purity and conciseness, its disdain of flowers of speech is more influenced by classical example than he himself thought. Addison, made a style of his own, of exquisite grace and urbanity; but Addison, who was an excellent Latin scholar, knew very well that these were Horatian qualities, and it is not at all improbable that Horace was his chief inspiration. For the 'Satires and 'Epistles' are much more akin to prose than to poetry, and the mission of Horace in these, which was to cure people of their offences against good taste and good manners by gentle ridicule, was exactly the mission of Addison. The prose of the later eighteenth century was also very much influenced by the classics. Johnson's head was full of Latin words and turns of phrase; Gibbon's classical background is the great fact of his life; Burke was steeped in Ciceronian oratory.

Coming to the novel we can say that Richardson had no classical background. But it is very different with Fielding. He was a man of considerable scholarship. He certainly knew Lucian and Petronius. He seems to have a good knowledge of many ancient authors, some of them Greek. The classical student recognises in Fielding a fellow student. But more important than

any number of references and allusions is his conception of the novel as a comic epic in prose. He thought of taking the heroics out of the epic, bringing it down to the level of ordinary life and, so to speak, humanising it. He was always satirising the heroic pose, in *Jonathan Wild* or another. But he did not mean his satire to apply to Homer or Virgil. His real object was rather to be a sort of prose Homer, saving himself from the absurdity or presumption of this by the use of irony and humour. He knew the famous criticism of 'Odyssey' by an ancient writer, quoted by Aristotle, that it was a mirror of human life. Fielding saw that the novel should be a mirror of human life and not merely (as Richardson had thought) the history of a human soul. Both Smollett and Sterne were bookish men, and their books were largely the Latin authors. Smollett was the better scholar. The Roman dinner in 'Pergerine Pickle' comes from the author's own reading, not from a dictionary of antiquities. Even Goldsmith, it will be remembered, bring a little Greek into the 'Vicar of Wakefield'. Though the chief readers of the novels were women who were utterly devoid of classical knowledge, the force of tradition was so strong that the novelists were conscious of the classical back-ground.

### **Nineteenth Century:—**

The eighteenth century is 'less, and the nineteenth is more. classical than it seems. By this is not meant that the eighteenth century paid only lip service to classical canons of taste and rules of composition. On the contrary it wholeheartedly adopted them and to the best of its ability applied them. But who does not feel that the eighteenth century is, of all periods of English history, the most thoroughly and typically English? On the other hand the nineteenth century, while ostentatiously breaking the fetters of classicism, does not really repudiate the genuine classics. It rather looks in them for things the eighteenth century had passed over, uncared for unobserved. It discovers the romantic charm of 'Odyssey', of Sappho, even of Virgil. But it is alone all in Greek literature that it makes its discoveries. Latin suffers an undue neglect. "If the eighteenth is our Latin, the nineteenth is our Greek, century."  
*(J. A. K. Thomson)*

Classical background scarcely entered the most characteristic work of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott. They felt the classical influence; but were not penetrated by it. Wordsworth's conviction,

classical background of Mr. Eliot, although it is very distinctly there, because he uses it. His style is precise and concentrated; he experiments with form, as the classics rarely did, but he is never formless, as his imitators too often are. A man who has written sympathetically of Virgil and Dryden is not hostile to the classical tradition.

The influence of the ancient classics upon English literature is an historical fact. It has not ceased and it cannot cease, because it is now a vital part of English culture. It may however become greatly less. "It has not at all impossible that classical education will, become so impoverished as to be hardly worth while for the ordinary student, and that the reading of Homer and Virgil will be left to a handful of scholars. What the historian observes is that it has happened before. Indeed that is an understatement; it has been by far the prevalent state of affairs in the history of Western Europe. But the study of the classics always revived. So there is no reason to expect that it will disappear. There is no reason even to expect that immediate and direct influence of the classics on authors will disappear. For a work of art like the 'Odyssey' or the 'Aeneid' is not like a scientific hypothesis; it is not disapproved, it loses none of its authority from the lapse of time, rather it increases that authority." *(J. A. K. Thomson)*

An historical fact however needs an interpretation and is generally susceptible of many. In the case with which we have been dealing the explanation are many and they are all true. For the classic change before our eyes even as we look at them. They are changing at the present moment. An attempt has been made to show how they looked to man of the Middle Ages, to the Renaissance, to the eighteenth century, to the nineteenth, to our own. Every age looks in the classics for what it likes and takes what suits it. The significance of the classics is inexhaustible or at least has not been exhausted. This perhaps ensures their permanence.

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## 8. Literature and Self Expression

*Or*

### The Man Behind the Book

"A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life."

*(Milton)*

As is the soul behind a body so is the man behind the book. The inktinted pages—bound and made available to the readers—do not constitute a book. A book is an animated organic whole where the writer has imparted the charm of the personality. When we read a book, it appears as if the author was holding an intimate conversation with us. Sometimes he speaks in a mellifluous tone, and sometimes he pours out venom also. But speak he must. Out of every line vibrates his voice—voice which is audible to our inner ear. Whether literature is "the criticism of life", or "an instrument of self discovery", or the record of the "best that is known and thought in the world", none can ignore the indomitable spirit of the man behind the book—spirit which pervades through it. Behind this expression or communication or representation there is the motive force provided by a man of flesh and blood and not by some hypothetical agency or by some mysterious disembodied force.

If literature be at bottom an expression of life, and if it be by virtue of the life which it expresses that it makes its special appeal, then the ultimate secret of its interest must be sought in its essentially personal character. Literature, according to Mathew Arnold's much discussed definition is a "criticism of life"; but this can mean only that it is an interpretation of life as life shapes itself in the mind of the interpreter. It is with the critic or the interpreter, therefore, that we have first to do. The French epigram hits the nail on the head—"Art is life seen through a temperament", for the mirror which the artist holds up to the world about him is of necessity the mirror of his own personality.

"A great book is born of the brain and the heart of its author; he has put himself into its pages; they partake of his life, and are instinct with his individuality. It is to the man in the book, therefore, that to begin with we have to find our way. We have to get



to know him as an individual. To establish personal intercourse with our books in a simple, direct, human way, should thus be our primary and constant purpose. We want first of all to become, not scholars, but good readers only when we make our reading a matter of close and sympathetic companionship. "Personal experience", it has been rightly said, "is the basis of all real literature" ; and to enter into such personal experience, and to share it, is similarly the basis of all real literary culture. A great book owes its greatness in the first instance to the greatness of the personality which gave it life ; for what we call genius is only another name for freshness and originality of outlook upon the world, of insight, and of thought. The mark of a really great book is that it has something fresh and original to say, and that it says this in a fresh and independent way. It is the utterance of one who has himself been close to those aspects of life of which he speaks, who has looked at them with his own eyes, who by the keenness of his vision has seen more deeply into things, and by the strength of his genius has apprehended their meaning more powerfully than the common race of men ; and who in addition has the artist's wonderful faculty of making us see and feel with him. "A good book says", as Milton finely says in words which, however hackneyed, can hardly be too often repeated, "is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." To throw open our whole nature to the quickening influence of such a master spirit, to let his life-blood flow freely into our veins, is the preliminary step in literary culture—the final secret of all profitable reading."

*(W. H. Hudson)*

Literature, in the works of Shakespeare, is a mirror held up to nature, i. e., a reflection of life. This reflection or picture of life appeals to us because it has a ring of truth or sincerity. Yet it is difficult to say what truth is, except perhaps in the strictly scientific sense. The truth of science may be precise and definable but not the truth of life which the man of letters presents in his writings. What literature presents is not a mere transcription of reality, not a photographic representation, but reality as seen through the mental and emotional lens of the artist. Art is man added to nature (Reality). The camera is a dead, mindless and emotionless machine and so it reproduces mechanically, without any selection or omissions whatever is exposed to its lens. Not so is the mind of the artist. The artist has his own imaginative and emotional



reactions which he expresses in his work. Literature is the representation not of the objective fact but of the artist's mood, of his response to Reality. "To a poet in a lover's mood," says Lamborn, "the sea smiles with him in his joy, the winds whisper the name of his beloved, the stars look down on him with friendly eyes; to the same poet in another mood, the same sea looks grim and cruel, the winds mock the sighs, and the cold stars watch him with a passionless inscrutable gaze." When the same object does not appear the same twice to an artist how can it produce the same impressions or arouse the same sentiments in two different artists? One poet may go into raptures over the loveliness of the flower, while the other may shed tears over its temporary beauty. Wordsworth finds the daffodils a source of joy :

"For oft when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude ;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills.  
And dances with the daffodils."

The same flowers, on the other hand, fills the heart of Herrick with sorrow :

"Fair daffodils, we weep to see  
You haste away so soon :  
And yet the early rising sun  
Has not attain'd his noon."

The reason for these divergent reactions to one and the same object is that art does not represent the purely external aspect of an object or event but the impressions produced upon the mind of the artist by them. Thus art is an imaginative representation of nature of reality. "Art is the presentation of the real in its mental aspect."

(W. B. Worsfold)

Before elucidating the significance of the impress of a writer's personality on his books further it will be fruitful to discuss the claim that literature is essentially the reflection of the spirit of the times in which it is created. A great book is thus not so much a mirror of the mind and heart of its author as of the thoughts and sentiments of the people in whose midst the author lived and had his being. Elizabethan poetry and drama are an indication of the zest for life, vigour and spirit of adventure which characterized the people of the glorious age, while the plays of Congreve, Shadwell

and Etheredge reflect the depths to which court morals and, through it, the general code of public morality had sunk during the days of the Restoration. Again, the Elizabethan era was essentially an age of poetry and song and the best geniuses of the period adopted it as the vehicle of their literary art, whereas the eighteenth century, the indispensable century, according to Mathew Arnold, was primarily an age of prose and reason and, therefore, the best literary artists of this period turned to prose and not to poetry. The Spectator, The Tatler, Boswell's Life of Johnson, the Battle of Books, could not have been written in the days of Queen Elizabeth even if their authors had been born then. Again the bitterness of the party factions, the prevailing cynicism, lack of idealism and facile optimism of the age of Queen Anne alone could inspire work like The Rape of the Lock, the Satires of Dryden and the Plays of Sheridan. Every writer of the age, it may be pointed out, came under the spell of France and pseudo-classicism, with its accent on reason, balance, moderation, prejudice against sentiment and emotion, aversion to the past and the charms of the nature. On the other hand when the shackles of classicism were snapped in the early 19th century and Romanticism swept over England and Europe, all the writers of the first thirty years of that century shared a common love of nature, flights of imagination and emotion, passion for the past and contempt for the established canons of art. The literature of the 20th century also possesses some characteristics which are common to the age—freedom of the sexes, the spirit of interrogation, the frustration and disillusionment caused by the two World Wars, the role of science particularly of biology and psychology, democratic ideal and socialism. The plays of Shaw and the novels of Galsworthy are essentially the product of the age. A poem like T. S. Eliot's Waste Land is characteristic of the 20th century even as the Rape of the Lock is the reflection of the 18th century. Thus every writer is the product of his age and surroundings to a certain extent and that is why literature is a reflection of Zeitgeist, the spirit of the age.

Nevertheless, every writer, worth his salt, retains his individuality, his exclusive characteristics and outlook, even while giving expression to the spirit of his age. The essence of literature lies in the individual approach of the author, his personality, which will rise above all influences. The author, it is true, is shaped by the spirit of his age but he also shapes it. A true man of letters

is the creature as well as the creator of his age. Those students and literary historians who see in literature only a process of social growth mistake the real point at issue. Thus the French critic Taine underrated the element of personality in his *Literary History of the British People*. He ignored the great truth that the genius of the man of letters always manages to transcend the bounds of race and country. It is in this context that Lytton Strachey observes that Pindar could have written under the Georges and Keats on the eve of the battle of Marathon. Again, Milton's *Paradise Lost* was a great challenge to the age of cynicism, law morals and satirical literature. Milton revolted rather than reflected the spirit of his times. Similarly, despite all the propitious atmosphere of heroism, noble ideals and love of song and drama, the Elizabethan age could produce only one and not two Shakespeares. How it is done nobody can say. The fact is that no formula will elucidate, no analysis explain the original, mysterious and incommunicable element of personal genius.

The English romantic poets of the first half of the 19th century are all described as belonging to a common literary school, yet how striking are the distinctions which distinguish the work of each of them ! Wordsworth and Shelly, for instance, evince a love of nature but the nature worship of one is easily distinguishable from that of the other. Again Shelly is consumed with a passion to regenerate humanity ; Wordsworth, too, aims at becoming a teacher of mankind but he lacks the fire and intensity of Shelley. On the other hand Keats has no such ulterior aim to inspire his art and he is content to be an uncritical worshipper at the altar of beauty wherever it be. Byron is interested only in the wild aspects of nature, while the experiences of his life embittered him so much that he is not a constructive reformer but an angry critic scoffing at mankind and his age. In sharp contrast to his contemporaries, Scott chose the medieval age as the source of his novels and became the father of historical fiction of its own kind while his contemporary, Jane Austen, seems to have completely escaped the romantic influences of the age, for she produced fiction of the domestic countryside life which carries the tradition of classicism in many ways. It is the writer's individuality which makes the *Immortality Ode* of Wordsworth, Keats's *Ode To A Nightingale*, Shelley's *Skylark*, Byron's *Childe Harold*, Scott's *Ivanhoe* and Austin's *Pride and Prejudice* occupy a distinctive niche in the large mansion of English literature. Each of these works has a

significance of its own, because the mind which created it was a distinct entity not to be confounded with any other.

The common influences of a particular age often produce varying impressions and reactions of its people. Dickens and Thackeray, Tennyson and Browning, Hardy and Meredith furnish some of the most characteristic examples of contemporaries being poles apart in their outlook and literary work. *David Copperfield* and *Vanity Fair*, products of the same era, present two entirely different pictures of Victorian life. Both Tennyson and Browning felt the impact of modern science but reacted in a different way. The contrast between Hardy and Meredith also illustrates that the man is always present behind the book. Hardy is an avowed tragedian, while Meredith, the exponent of the Comic Spirit, though both lived at the same time. Hardy's tragic conception challenges comparison with some of the greatest exponents of this art. In Shakespeare, tragedy is largely a product of the tragic flow of the heroes and the heroines but in Hardy's novels the tragic characters are shown as victims of an unfeeling and capricious fate. Tragedy has been attempted by other writers too, such as Galsworthy, but his tragic conception again is very different. If in Hardy the villain of the piece is a malignant fate, in Galsworthy society is put into the dock. *Forsyte Saga* arouses different emotions than those which we experience while going through *Tess* because their creators had different visions of the tragic life.

We trace the man behind the book through his choice of subject-matter, philosophy of life, artistic principles, choice of literary forms, but one of most important features to know an author is to study his style. The style is the man. This remark is profoundly true, for a person's style is not like the glove he wears on his hand, nay it is like his very skin, a part and parcel of his being. There is a magic in the way an artist handles words in prose and poetry. The secret of this magic is the author's exclusive possession. Thus Bacon is a master of terse, concise, epigrammatic phrase in prose even as Pope is unsurpassed in epigrammatic verse. Addison writes inimitable pedestrian prose, whereas Ruskin is an equally inimitable exponent of the ornate and rich diction steeped in the Bible. John Bunyan, another ardent student of the Biblical phrase, has given a prose which is quite distinct from the writings of Ruskin. Carlyle's style is rugged,



fiery, eloquent and fierce like the hot lava of a volcano. Charles Lamb gives a quaint and archaic prose enlivened with Puckish humour. Dr. Johnson was incapable of writing simple prose like that of Addison, and cultivated a style which gave rise to the nickname of "Johnsonese". In poetry Milton's style is stately and sublime, while Wordsworth is shorn of all ornament. Tennyson is ornate and sonorous, whereas Browning deliberately turned his back on verbal sweetness and thus his style is rugged though powerful. The same variations are found in regard to the metrical effects of different poets. The eccentricities of style are most in evidence in modern English literature. The free verse of Robert Bridges, the absence of all metres in the work of ultra-modern poets, the quaint prose of Joyce's *Ulysses*, the style of Eliot's *Wasteland* stand in a class of their own.

To the writer in the act of composition the creative activity of literature is undoubtedly an exercise of the organs of consciousness, a stretching out of his intellectual hands and feet. He is mastering experience and mastering the medium of language by imposing on either a personal pattern. Even when he is utilising a traditional theme and an inherited poetic diction he is in a thousand subtle ways adopting and shaping them to an intimately personal vision and idiom. He is finding himself by apparently losing himself in them, adding a personal flavour even to a personal blend. His writings are definitely pieces of him, expressions of his personality. When Newman in a classical passage expounded the nature of literature he had in mind this personal aspect of writing. "Literature is the personal use or exercise of language. The throng and successions of ideas, thoughts, feelings, imaginations, .....the conceptions which are so original in him, his views of the external things, his judgements upon life, manners and history.....the very pulsation of his intellect does he image forth.....in a corresponding language, which is as multiform as the inward mental action itself, and analogous to it, the faithful expression of his intense personality, attending on his inward world of thought as its very shadow.....His thought and feeling are personal, and so his language is personal."

Croce's expressionism is only the emotional systematisation of the truth that the writing reflects the personality of the writer. It should be remembered that Croce regards all art as the full, free, unexpurgated expression of the impressions in the artist's mind.



"So long as ugliness and turpitude exist in nature and impose themselves on the artist, it is not possible to prevent the expression of these things also." In fact the only excellence which can be legitimately demanded from a work of art is the completeness with which it expresses the personality of the artist ; its social and moral consequences are entirely irrelevant to its artistic quality. The work of art needs not give delight or instruction, it may not be either an imitation of life or a criticism of life, it need not be a thing of beauty or a joy ever : so long as it has enabled the artist to achieve self-expression it is entitled to be regarded as a work of art.

Ignoring for the time being the factitious, casuistical nature of Croce's thought and taking the argument at its face value, we can accept the view that the genuine artist will strive to express himself, the shades and colours of experience, by means of his work of art, that he will remain faithful to his intuition and will not falsify it in order to bask in social approval. But while this integrity will entitle his work to be taken seriously, it will not be the sole or even the main criterion of its value. The genuineness of the poem will undoubtedly depend upon its being the poet's genuine self expression, but the greatness, the value of the poem will depend upon the value of the self which is expressed, the stature and quality of the personality which is the 'only begetter' of the poem.

The cult 'the man behind the book' only means that the artist expresses his own vision of life in the language controlled by his mind. It should not be taken to signify that the artist himself, his personal hopes and fears dreams and ambitions, likes and dislikes are the subject matter of his writings reducing them to an autobiography. Great literature cannot only be reduced to a form of private self-indulgence. The great writer is characterised not so much by the self-centred intensity of his private feelings and experiences as by his capacity to go out of his private, self and sympathise with, imaginatively penetrate into the personalities and absorb the experiences of others. He is breaking down the narrow dykes of his individuality and pouring his stream into the ocean of humanity. He is learning to make the personal impersonal and the impersonal personal.

That is why Coleridge mentions, among the 'specific symptoms of poetic power' which he discerns in Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis "the choice of subjects very remote from the private interests

and circumstances of the writer himself.....where the subject is taken immediately from the author's personal sensations and experiences, the excellence of a particular poem is but an equivocal mark, and often a fallacious pledge, of genuine poetic power." The poet who is preoccupied with himself unduly limits his range and repeats his effects ever less effectually. It is not merely that the most varied and colourful experience of an individual can only cover a small part of human possibilities ; it is the paralysing incapacity of the self-centred man to look at things from the other man's point of view. This narcissism has proved fatal to the artistic quality of a good deal of romantic literature, as is evident from the work of Byron and Shelley.

It is by way of a counterblast to the subjective, personal theory of art popularised by the Romantics that some writers have propounded the impersonal theory of art. Flaubert is the loud spokesman of this school of writers. He is of the opinion that the poets are "not preoccupied with themselves or their passions, they put their personality into the background in order to absorb themselves in the personality of others..... Nothing is more feeble than to put personal feelings into a work of art..... The author should be in his work as God is in the universe, present everywhere, visible nowhere." As the seed intermingles with earth and ultimately sprouts out as a plant, so is the personality of the writer ; it should be merged with his works. T. S. Eliot also means the same thing when he says "the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality". "The poet has, not a personality to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality..... The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done..... Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion, it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality." (T. S. Eliot)

The artist is not the great "I" standing on the shoulders of his creative art; he has dissolved himself in his creative feats. His message is there but it is codified. When such a chemical change has taken place, the 'ego' has been converted into 'omni'. A passage from Eliot's poetry will show how completely a poet can transcend the limitations of a single— his own personality and give a body and voice to experiences which are not his own but which he has made his own :

"Here I am, old man in a dry month,  
Being read to by a boy, waiting for a train.  
I was neither at the hot gates  
Nor fought in the warm rain  
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,  
Bitten by flies fought.  
My house is a decayed house,  
And the Jew squats on the window still, the owner,  
Spawned in same estaminet of Antwerp,  
Blistered in Brussels; patched and peeled in London."

Here the images and the sentiments expressed have no biographical connection with the poet's own life; they are patterned into unity and charged with significance by his 'shaping spirit of imagination'. It is the free and unattached mind of the poet that has enabled him to make the impersonal personal; just as the same power enables Wordsworth to reverse the process and make the personal impersonal in a characteristic passage like the following :

"For I have learned  
To look on Nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue."

"Ultimately, literature is worthwhile, not primarily because it reveals to us the moods and motions of a single personality, but because it enables us to "see into the life of things" while the poet will naturally be preoccupied with the task of giving perfect expression' to the 'vision within' and achieving complete 'self expression' in that sense, the reader will not think it enough that the poem expresses the poet's personality; he will judge the value of the poem by the value, the inclusiveness, the illuminating quality of the experience it sets going in his mind, the vision it enables him to see. Literature is not an appendix to autobiography, it is the very book of the words set to 'the still sad music of humanity.'"

(M. G. Bhate)

Of course, true that true literature is not mere autobiography. However, it is to be admitted that literature is a human product informed by a human purpose. While imitating life the artist is bound to give an interpretation and valuation of life. Art is life seen through a human medium and therefore patterned by human

consciousness. "We make our own world ; when we have made it away we can remake it approximately truer." The work of art is the obvious example of 'making our own world.' Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* is not a copy of any one in the real world but a symbol of Flaubert's own conception of the futility, the ennui, the spiritual anaemia of bourgeois civilization. Although he wants art to be impersonal and scientific and denies to the artist the right to express his opinions on the people in the novel or manifest his own feelings, he in fact succeeds supremely well in evoking in the mind of the reader a definite attitude towards bourgeois civilization. Even the most objective, impersonal imitation of life—if it is really an artistic imitation—turns to be 'life seen through a temperament's coloured and controlled by the heart and the mind of the imitator :

"O Lady ! we receive but what we give  
And in our life alone does nature live.....  
And would we ought behold of higher worth  
Than that inanimate cold world allowed  
To the poor loveless ever—anxious crowd,  
Ah ! from the soul itself must issue forth  
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud  
Enveloping the Earth——." (Coleridge)

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